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# Paradoxical communication reconsidered.

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# PARADOXICAL COMMUNICATION RECONSIDERED

A Dissertation Presented

by

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ABSTRACT

Paradoxical Communication Reconsidered

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This dissertation argues that the formal application of the Epimenides paradox and Russell's set paradox to communication has often been incorrect. It is further argued that the vicious-circle dynamics generated by these logical paradoxes--they are true only if false and vice versa--have been mistakenly conceptualized as powerful determinants of social interaction. Two communication forms described as paradoxical in the literature are shown not to be formal paradoxes. These forms are: 1) contradictory double-level communication which includes Bateson's original paradoxes of abstraction, the double bind, and the strange loop; and 2) the request for involuntary behavior which includes hypnotic injunctions, therapeutic paradox, and requests for feeling shifts in ordinary relationships, e.g., "You should enjoy helping me." A third communication form, the request for noncompliant behavior, is shown to be formally paradoxical. This form derives from the injunction, "Disobey me," and includes requests for

independence, dominance and defiance. Utilizing the Coordinated Management of Meaning model of human communication (Pearce and Cronen, 1980), all three forms are described as cultural-level metarules which specify potential meaning patterns, but do not determine actual social transactions.

An interview study was carried out to investigate how involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests are negotiated in ordinary close relationships. Forty undergraduate women in two equal groups described events surrounding either an involuntary or a noncompliant behavior request which they expressed in a close relationship. It was found that, contrary to the stereotype in the literature that these requests frustrate positive outcomes, satisfying responses following such requests commonly occur. A qualitative analysis of the data suggests that the significant context for understanding these requests involves the relational issues of closeness and control.

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# CHAPTER I

## OVERVIEW

Epimenides of Crete is credited with discovering the curious meaning reversals generated by a statement like, "I am lying." If the speaker lies, then the statement is true, but if the speaker is telling the truth, then the statement is a lie. This paradox has fascinated Western minds since its discovery and has spurred several philosophical developments in the 20th century. Russell and Whitehead proposed their Theory of Logical Types in part to address this kind of paradox in the form of Russell's set paradox. Their argument was that the paradox derives from a confusion of meaning levels and their solution was to declare such confusions unacceptable. Gödel later disagreed and asserted that in any complex meaning system, there is a necessary reflexivity which may confuse levels of abstraction and generate paradox. In both the Theory of Logical Types and in Gödel's work, the Epimenides paradox has functioned to stimulate thought on basic questions of truth and knowledge.

It is in part due to the attention given the Epimenides paradox in 20th century philosophy that logical paradox was introduced into the study of communication by Gregory Bateson. Bateson was an original and wideranging theorist whose interest in hierarchical patterns in nature and

communication found a special resonance in the thinking of Russell, Whitehead, and Gödel on meaning levels in abstract systems. His consideration of the parallel between meaning levels in social interchange and meaning levels in philosophical systems led to the conclusion that the logical paradoxes described in philosophy must also occur in ordinary communication. This provocative idea became a major area of exploration in the study of interpersonal communication.

In the early 1950s, Bateson pursued his interest in the idea of paradoxical communication through the organization of a research team which eventually included Don Jackson, William Fry, John Weakland, and Jay Haley. This group initially described and studied "paradoxes of abstraction" in communication which may be defined as the contradictions which occur between messages delivered at different meaning levels. When Bateson's group turned their attention to schizophrenic communication, they dropped an explicit focus on paradox and instead described a new communication form called the "double bind." The distinction between paradox and the double bind was never clarified, however, and paradox continued to be associated with the powerful traps and evasions of communication in the families of schizophrenics.

A return to an explicit focus on paradoxical communication was provided by Haley (1963) who, in

Strategies of Psychotherapy, argued the significant influence of paradox in a range of interactional phenomena including ordinary communication in close relationships, hypnosis, and therapeutic intervention. Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967) continued to focus on paradox as a powerful communication form in their extremely influential book, Pragmatics of Human Communication, subtitled A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies, and Paradoxes. The works of these authors established paradox as a highly significant aspect of communications theory and research. The continuing fascination of communications theorists with paradox is highlighted by the more recent writings of Vernon Cronen, Barnett Pearce, and their colleagues in their Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) model of human communication. They propose a re-evaluation of paradox as a type of necessary reflexivity in the negotiation of social communication (Cronen, Johnson, and Lannamann, 1982; Pearce and Cronen, 1980).

In addition to functioning as a focus for theoretical exploration, paradox has also been widely discussed in the context of therapeutic influence and intervention. Haley and Watzlawick and his colleagues argued the position that therapeutic symptom prescription may be understood as a variety of paradoxical communication and numerous clinical reports have documented the efficacy and explored the operation of this technique. The publication of the Milan

Group's book, Paradox and Counterparadox (Selvini Palazolli, Boscolo, Cecchin, and Prata, 1978) provoked fresh enthusiasm for the use of therapeutic paradox as well as new theoretical efforts to account for its usefulness.

This brief overview of the paradoxical communication literature suggests the range of phenomena to which this concept has been applied. The purpose of this dissertation was to reconsider this literature through the use of conceptual analysis and an exploratory empirical study. Using both conceptual and empirical approaches, two issues are investigated: (1) what communication forms should be considered paradoxes of the Epimenides variety? and (2) how should the power of paradoxical communication be understood?

Chapter II provides a conceptual review and critique of the paradoxical communication literature based on the issues of form and formal determinism. It is argued that three communication forms have been described as paradoxical in the literature while only one should be considered paradoxical according to the definition used in the literature itself. Contradictory double-level communication and the request for involuntary behavior are the communication forms mistakenly described as paradoxical in the literature while the request for noncompliant behavior may be truly considered a paradox of the Epimenides variety. Further, it is proposed that all three communication forms described as paradoxical in the literature have ben

inappropriately viewed as intrinsically powerful. Theorists have mistakenly viewed the meaning reversals associated with logical paradox as necessarily driving ordinary interaction in particular ways. This view is documented and critiqued in Chapter II.

An alternative model of the three communication forms described as paradoxical in the literature is presented in Chapter III. Here the CMM framework for describing human communication is used to specify the three communication forms presented in Chapter II. It is argued that these forms have no intrinsic influence on social interactions, but rather are negotiated variously depending on social context.

Chapter IV presents the questions and method of an exploratory empirical study of two particular communication forms--involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests. The study was designed to gather descriptive information on how these requests are negotiated in ordinary close relationships and to explore whether formal differences in these requests are associated with differences in their social negotiation. Further, two particular research questions are addressed in the study. First, do satisfying outcomes to involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests occur? Second, when a response following one of these requests is perceived as compliant, does satisfaction with the response correlate

with the perception of the response as also involuntary or noncompliant? Chapter V presents the results of the study. A qualitative analysis is also proposed which suggests the importance of the dimensions of closeness and control in the negotiation of involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests.

The dissertation concludes with a discussion of several points in Chapter VI. First, the role of paradox in the developing study of communication and family systems is briefly explored with the goal of putting the dissertation in perspective. Second, the results of the conceptual critique are discussed in terms of recommendations for the use of the concept of paradox in communication study. Third, the empirical study is evaluated critically and future directions for research are proposed. Finally, clinical implications of the dissertation are commented upon.

# C H A P T E R  I I

## FORM AND FORMAL DETERMINISM IN THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF PARADOXICAL COMMUNICATION

This chapter provides a critical review of the paradoxical communication literature with a focus on two related issues: form and formal determinism. The issue of form refers to questions about the structure of communication described as paradoxical and is well precedented in the literature. Many authors have been concerned with specifying what forms of communication are and are not paradoxical (e.g., Abeles, 1976; Dell, 1981; Rabkin 1976). The issue of formal determinism refers to how a paradoxical form of communication is understood to influence social interaction. Despite the common assumption that paradox is a powerful form of communication, this issue has not received explicit attention in the literature.

The formal analysis presented here departs from the observation that a single formal definition of paradox, i.e., as a self-reflexive negative statement, has been applied to an extreme diversity of phenomena including animal play, schizophrenia, and psychotherapy. A close reading of the literature reveals that, in fact, three distinct forms of communication have been labelled paradoxical while only one should actually be considered

paradoxical according to the formal definition employed by the theorists themselves. The two communication forms inappropriately described as paradoxical are contradictory double-level communication and the request for involuntary behavior. The request for non-compliant behavior is a third communication form which has been appropriately described as paradoxical.

The elaboration of formal distinctions might represent an exercise in hairsplitting but for the ways in which social influence has been attributed to communication described as formally paradoxical. The fundamental error of many theorists has been to assume that a logically problematic message is necessarily problematic in actual communication. This review will both document and critique this assumption.

The chapter begins with an elaboration of the issues of form and formal determinism in the paradoxical communication literature. Following this, the three communication forms described as paradoxical in the literature are reviewed.

## The Formal Definition of Paradox Used by Communication Theorists

Paradox is not a singular concept--it is used to refer to a variety of pragmatic and conceptual phenomena in everyday life and in philosophy. In ordinary social

exchange, the term is commonly used in the sense of the second definition given by Webster's New World Dictionary (1974): "a statement that seems contradictory, unbelievable, or absurd but that may be true in fact" (p. 1029). In this vein, the assertion, "the more money you spend, the more money you have," is paradoxical and not simply contradictory or absurd when you consider tax laws that make investment more financially rewarding than simple saving.

In philosophy, a logical paradox "consists of two contrary, or even contradictory, propositions to which we are led by apparently sound arguments" (van Heijenoort, 1969, p. 45). This definition covers a variety of puzzles and problems including the paradox of Achilles and the Tortoise, the barber paradox, and the paradox of the surprise quiz. Quine (1962) points out that logical paradoxes may be resolved in three basic ways: through the discovery of a hidden argument which shows the truth of the paradox, through the discovery of fallacious reasoning which shows the falsity of the paradox, and through an actual modification of the system which generates the paradox. Historically, paradoxes exist in a relative context--yesterday's assumptions and accepted principles of thought lead to paradoxes which rapidly dissipate when considered under today's premises.

Communications theorists have referred to a particular

type of paradox which may be defined as a self-reflexive negative assertion. The two most common examples are the Epimenides or liar paradox and Russell's set paradox. This type of paradox is addressed by Russell and Whitehead's Theory of Logical Types which has also received considerable attention, in itself, from communications theorists. In order to appreciate the formal structure of this type of paradox and the logical-types analysis addressed to it, Russell and Whitehead's work on this topic will be outlined here. Note that this discussion follows Hofstadter (1979).

The Theory of Logical Types was developed in response to a paradox Russell discovered having to do with the properties of sets. Russell reasoned that there are two kinds of sets--sets which are not members of themselves, e.g., the set of all apples is itself not an apple, and sets which are members of themselves, e.g., the set of all things which are not apples is itself not an apple. This distinction is the basis for two sets of sets--the set of all sets which are not members of themselves and the set of all sets which are members of themselves. A paradox arises when you ask, "Is the set of all sets which are not members of themselves a member of itself?" If it is a member of itself, then it is not a set which is not a member of itself, and so it is not a member of itself. But if it is not a member of itself, then it is a set which is not a member of itself, and so it is a member of itself. To

condense, if it is a member of itself, it is not and if it is not, it is.

Russell was concerned with this set paradox because the reasoning involved in its construction appeared to utilize only the most basic ideas of set theory. If these intuitively correct ideas could lead to paradox, then doubt was cast on their validity and if doubt could be raised concerning the concept of set, where could it not arise? Russell wanted to eliminate this source of uncertainty and so joined with Whitehead in the effort to derive set theory and mathematics from pure logic, the result being the three volumes of "Principia Mathematica" and the Theory of Logical Types.

The Theory of Logical Types posits that a set represents a higher order of abstraction than its members and therefore a set cannot be a member of itself. Instead, a hierarchy of levels exists with each set containing only members or sets of a lower logical type. This rule forbids the kind of reasoning which led Russell to his set paradox--the presumption that a set can or cannot be a member of itself is disallowed.

It will be useful in the subsequent analysis of communication described as paradoxical to present a distinction here: a violation of the Theory of Logical Types does not, in itself, create a paradox, but only the potential for paradox. In the first step of Russell's set

paradox, he proposes that a set may or may not be a member of itself, but merely to say that a set is or is not a member of itself is not paradoxical. For example, asserting that the set of all apples is not an apple and so is not a member of itself is not paradoxical. It is only when a self-reflexive negative assertion is proposed that paradox results. This is the essence of the paradox posed by the attempt to classify the set of all sets which are not members of themselves. The rule for inclusion in this set is negative--to belong a set must not be a member of itself--and then this negative rule is applied reflexively to the set itself. The result is the curious entailment of meaning reversals characteristic of this type of paradox.

The general interest of Logical Types theory might have been limited but for its relevance to the ancient liar paradox of Epimenides, "I am lying."[1] This statement is considered paradoxical because it is true only if it is false and false only if it is true. The application of Logical-Types theory to this paradox suggests that it is formally equivalent to Russell's set paradox. A negative statement, "I am lying," is proposed at an object level of language--it is a statement itself--and simultaneously the negative statement, "I am lying," is proposed at a metalanguage level--it is a statement about a statement, i.e., about itself. It is the self-reflexivity of this negative statement which creates paradox. According to

Logical-Types theory the way to avoid this paradox is to ban as meaningless all confusions of language levels, not simply those seen in self-reflexive negative sentences.

In communication theory, the Epimenides paradox has been consistently referred to as a defining example of paradox. The negative injunction, "Disobey me," has also been frequently used as a defining example of paradox by communication theorists because in order to obey this directive, it must be disobeyed and vice versa. A logical-types analysis reveals that this negative directive simultaneously refers to an object level--it is itself an injunction--and to a metalevel--it is an injunction about how to respond to an injunction. This self-reflexive confusion of levels involving a negative injunction would be seen as the source of the paradox according to Logical-Types Theory.

Note that throughout this discussion the necessity of negation in the formation of paradox has been emphasized. This is due to the observation that self-reflexivity, in itself, does not generate the meaning reversals of paradox. The set of all sets which are members of themselves may not be meaningfully classified as a member of itself, but it does not generate paradox. In the same way, if I say, "I am telling the truth," or "Obey me," I am confusing language levels and the statements may be meaningless, but they are not paradoxical. Fry (1963) also makes this point.

To summarize, the Theory of Logical Types addresses a particular type of paradox, that which occurs when a negative statement reflexively classifies itself. The solution to this paradox proposed by the theory is never to confuse a class and its members no matter if paradox is thereby generated or not. For purposes of clarity, in this dissertation, the term, "paradox," will only be used to refer to the type of paradox addressed by Logical-Types Theory, to repeat, a self-reflexive negative statement.

Before proceeding it should be noted that the effort to disallow paradox embodied in the Theory of Logical Types was overruled by Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem which showed that Russell and Whitehead's goal of an entirely self-consistent logical mathematical system was impossible, in fact, "that no axiomatic system whatsoever could produce all number-theoretical truths, unless it were an inconsistent system" (Hofstadter, 1979, p. 24). Gödel's work did not deny that paradox may result from logical type confusions, but proposed that these paradoxes are unavoidable in complex logical systems. In this way, his work reinforced an interest in paradox by communications theorists because of its implication that paradox is an inevitable component of human meaning systems (e.g., Cronen, Johnson, and Lannamann, 1982; Ruesch and Bateson, 1951; Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson, 1967).

## The Issue of Formal Determinism

Formal causality is a philosophical concept which may be traced to Plato and Aristotle. The basic idea is that events are caused by the formal pattern which underlies them. This type of explanation contrasts with the notion of efficient cause, the idea that an antecedent event functions as the direct stimulus for the event in question. For example, when one billiard ball strikes another, the motion of the first may be seen as the efficient cause for the motion of the second. Usually, the idea of formal cause is understood as a mathematical relation although originally Plato argued that human actions are determined by their adherence to ideal nonmathematical forms, e.g., Socrates' decision to face execution over escape into exile was caused by his aspiration to the ideal form of honor (Averill, 1976). Averill (1981) explains that formal causality has been applied in more recent times to abstract concepts in the physical sciences, e.g., gravity may be understood as a formal and mathematically expressible causal relationship among material bodies.

In family systems theory, formal causality has been involved implicitly in most concepts. Bateson's (1958) original formulation of schismogenesis, for example, posited an accelerating interactional spiral that could occur in a variety of contexts including paranoia, international

hostilities, and dominant-submissive marital roles. The point is that a formal pattern was identified and used in an explanatory fashion. Other family concepts such as homeostasis, rules, and positive feedback utilize a similar focus on formal relations.

The question raised by the use of formal concepts in family systems theory is whether these concepts are only meant to provide a descriptive summary of interaction or whether they are understood as having a causal influence on interaction. Theorists have approached this issue differently. Jackson (1965) stressed the descriptive aspect of family rules, suggesting that rules do not determine interaction, but are enforced in the process of interaction. More recently, Hoffman (1981) has implied a deterministic view of systemic form. Writing of complementary interaction in families, she asserts that "the terms 'dominant' and 'submissive' are unfortunate because they suggest a power struggle rather than a systemic sequence that neither person has the power to resist" (1981, p. 43; emphasis added). Here Hoffman suggests it is the systemic pattern which causes and not merely describes the interactional cycle.

In passing, it may be noted that the issue of formal causality appears to be at the heart of the current epistemology debate. In particular, Dell (1982) has attacked the idea that homeostasis "causes" family behavior and argues that the concept of "coherence" is more

appropriate to the understanding of family interaction. According to Dell (1982), "coherence simply implies a congruent interdependence in functioning whereby all the aspects of the system fit together" (p. 31); there is no implication of causality, circular or otherwise. Unfortunately, Dell's substitution of the concept of coherence for homeostasis begs the question of formal causality by denying the relevance of any kind of causal explanation to family interaction.

The role of formal causality in family systems explanations of behavior represents an issue which cannot be fully explored here. It is raised because it provides a useful context for understanding why paradox has been considered a powerful determinant of interaction. This is because of the similarity between the idea of formal causality and the idea that a paradoxical form of communication determines interaction. In developing systemic explanations, theorists focussed on formal patterns in relationships with an implied belief in the form as the cause of behavior. Within this shift in assumptions about the explanations of interaction, the idea that a paradoxical form of communication could influence interaction took hold. Both the idea of formal causality and the idea of the determining influence of a paradoxical communication form share an assumption of form as cause. A distinction, however, must be made between these two ideas. Formal

causality represents a type of explanation in which an underlying form is seen as the source of behavior whereas the idea that a paradoxical communication form determines interaction is based on the form as an initiating condition of interaction. The force of paradoxical communication stems from the formal nature of the message as the stimulus for a particular type of interaction. In this sense, the communication form is seen more as an efficient cause of behavior. In the discussion which follows, the idea that a communication form forces interaction in a particular direction is referred to as formal determinism and this concept should be considered distinct from the idea of formal causality.

In general, communication described as formally paradoxical has been understood as a determining influence in phenomena ranging from schizophrenia to hypnosis to therapeutic change. Repeatedly, it is the paradoxical form of the communication which has been seen as a pathogenic agent in severely disturbed human relationships and at the same time the remedy for these ills through therapeutic intervention. The title of the Milan Group's (Selvini Palazolli et al., 1978) influential book, Paradox and Counter-paradox, refers to this basic theme.

The attribution of power to communication described as formally paradoxical derives most importantly from the oscillation of meaning generated by paradox. This dynamic

has received both direct and indirect reference in the literature. Haley (1963) writes explicitly that a person faced with the directive not to follow the directive, i.e., a "Disobey-me" paradox, is in an impossible situation: "The receiver cannot obey the directive nor disobey it. If he obeys the directive not to follow directives, then he is not following directives" (p. 17). Watzlawick et al. (1967) distinguish paradoxical from contradictory communication by referring to the dynamic of vicious-circle reasoning: "The paradoxical injunction, on the other hand, bankrupts choice itself, nothing is possible, and a self-perpetuating oscillating series is set in motion" (p. 217; emphasis in the original). Abeles (1976) stresses the same issue in describing the effects of paradox in communication and writes that responding to this form of communication "is something like turning on the light to better inspect the dark; you simply cannot do it" (p. 119). These theorists express the belief that the logical properties of paradox generate significant problems in communication.

Implicit reference to the power of paradox in communication is made when the Epimenides or "Disobey-me" paradox is used as a defining example. This is because the meaning reversals generated by these paradoxes are presented with the implication that such effects naturally follow in ordinary communication. The impression is given that paradox in ordinary communication creates the same elusive

oscillation of meaning as it does when considered in a logical context.

The discussion of formal determinism and paradox is complicated by two additional factors--one formal and one pragmatic. First, theorists have described nonparadoxical messages as paradoxical and then have implicated the particular form misidentified as paradoxical in determining interaction. As we shall see, the best example of this is the request for involuntary behavior. Although not formally paradoxical, this type of request is formally impossible--involuntary behavior cannot count as compliant behavior--and theorists have referred to this formal contradiction in explaining why this type of message is powerful.

The second problem with the discussion of how formal paradox has been understood to affect interaction is that very often theorists have confused the issue of form with the pragmatic negotiation of form. The double bind, for example, has been assumed to be paradoxical but its impact on behavior has also been discussed in terms of the punctuation of that form in interaction. Theorists have implied that the double bind is a powerful communication form while often failing to appreciate that its power derives from a form that is negotiated in a particular way.

Before proceeding, it should be noted that Bateson (1972, 1978, 1979) himself emphasized the limits of logic as a model for the world of cause and effect using paradox as

an example. The contrast that he draws is between what happens when paradox is encountered in the abstract world of logic and in the ordinary world of cause and effect. In the former, the discovery of paradox invalidates the entire system in which it is located while in the latter, for example in a computer, paradox may only be modeled through oscillation of "yes-no" circuits. Bateson writes:

> The computer never truly encounters logical paradox, but only the simulation of paradox in trains of cause and effect. The computer therefore does not fade away. It merely oscillates [1972, p. 281].

Given that most theorists addressing the effects of paradox in human communication have focussed on just this oscillation of meaning, it is unfortunate that Bateson did not more specifically answer the question of what happens when a person instead of a computer encounters paradox. Bateson makes it clear that the person would not disappear but would an oscillating contradiction parallel to the computer's "yes-no" cycle be generated? Bateson suggests that a shift to a metalevel is possible, i.e., commenting on the impossible nature of the communication, but he appears never to have said exactly what a human being confronted with paradox would do.

The conceptual basis for rejecting formal determinism in communication described as paradoxical is simply that meaning and action are negotiated in a social context. In other words, logic does not compel human belief or behavior.

This point has been underlined by several contemporary writers (Gergen, 1981; Hofstadter, 1979; Winch, 1958) through reference to an imaginary dialogue constructed by Lewis Carroll (1895) between Achilles and the Tortoise--two characters borrowed from Zeno's paradox. In this conversation, the Tortoise asks Achilles to convince him to accept a proposition 'Z' that follows logically from two propositions, 'A' and 'B,' that he (the Tortoise) already accepts. The Tortoise grants intermediary propositions--e.g., 'C' (If A and B are true, then Z must be true)--but he continues to defer acceptance of Z itself. When the Tortoise asks the exasperated Achilles, "Suppose I still refuse to accept Z?" Achilles exclaims: "Then Logic would take you by the throat and force you to do it! . . . Logic would tell you 'You can't help yourself'" (Carroll, 1895, p. 280)! But the Tortoise can help himself and the dialogue continues indefinitely. The moral of the story is that the irresistibility of logic operates in a formal, not a pragmatic, sphere.

The implication of Carroll's anecdote for communication described as paradoxical is obvious--the vicious-circle meaning reversals generated logically by paradox do not necessarily occur in ordinary communication, much less paralyze the process of social interaction. In Chapter III, the question of how the logic of paradox may be implicated in communication will be discussed.

## Contradictory Double-Level Communication

This communication form may be defined as the presence of contradictory messages delivered at two distinct levels of abstraction. The meaning of such a communication is derived from the hierarchical relationship of the contradictory messages, i.e., the higher level message influences the interpretation of the lower level message (Cronen et al., 1982). In the paradoxical communication literature, three types of contradictory double-level communication have been described as paradoxical--these types may be distinguished on the basis of the contextual hierarchy of the contradictory messages.

In the "paradoxes of abstraction" the contextual hierarchy between messages is clear, although subject to negotiation, and the meaning of the communication is relatively stable. This form was originally described by Bateson (Ruesch and Bateson, 1951) in his analysis of how the message defining a context as unreal, e.g., in play, ritual, or art, is communicated and was applied by Haley (1955) to psychotherapy and fantasy and by Fry (1963) to humor. More recently, Harris (1980) has presented a communicational analysis of a married couple's interactions in which she identifies several paradoxical rules. At least one of these rules may be better understood as defining a "paradox of abstraction."

The second type of contradictory double-level communication described as paradoxical is the "strange loop" applied recently by theorists of the CMM approach to human communication (Cronen et al., 1982; Pearce and Cronen, 1980). The strange loop consists of two contradictory messages in a balanced hierarchical relationship--each is equally likely to be the context for the other--and the meaning of the communication cannot be established without additional information. This form has been used to understand transitional episodes in developing relationships and has also been applied to meaning shifts in the dynamics of alcoholism (Cronen, Note 1).

The third type of contradictory double-level communication described in the literature as paradoxical is the double bind (Bateson, Jackson, Haley, and Weakland, 1972). Here the contextual relationship of the contradictory messages is enforced such that the meaning of the communication reverses over time. The double bind has been the focus of sustained empirical and conceptual interest--this literature will be briefly reviewed with a focus on understanding the conceptualization of the double bind as paradoxical.

## The paradoxes of abstraction

The introduction of paradox into the study of communication began with Bateson's (Ruesch and Bateson,

1951) consideration of contexts such as play, ritual, and art in which the message that the activity is not the activity it represents must be conveyed. Bateson argued that this message is the equivalent of the paradox, "I am lying," and it was this idea which was the focus for the initial research of his Palo Alto group. The most explicit explanation (still more evocative than precise) of how Bateson understood these paradoxes of abstraction appears in his paper, "A Theory of Play and Fantasy" (1972). As noted above, this particular conceptual use of paradox was applied by Haley (1955) to fantasy and psychotherapy and later by Fry (1963) to humor. Interest in the paradoxes of abstraction faded with the inception of the closely related double-bind theory, but reference to the conceptualization is implied when theorists write of the role of the double bind or paradox in play, fantasy, humor, and ritual (e.g., Bogdan, 1982).

Although Harris (1980) does not link her analysis to these paradoxes of abstraction, her recent study describes communication patterns which are appropriately understood in terms of this communication form. Because Harris's work is distinct from that of Bateson, Haley, and Fry, her paper is examined separately in this section.

Bateson's initial reference to the paradoxes of abstraction (Ruesch and Bateson, 1951) seemed to derive deductively from his recognition that, given a multilevel

communication system, "contradictions of the Russellian type must creep in" (p. 223). Specifically, he noted that some such contradiction must be present in human activities like play. Later he addressed this conceptualization to the problem of how monkeys are able to communicate the difference between playful behavior which resembles hostile behavior and the hostile behavior itself (Bateson, 1972). In other words, how could one act be labeled so as to be distinguished from the act it represents? Here Bateson begins to explore the question within a frame of levels of abstraction--an idea taken from Logical Types Theory. Regarding the monkeys, he argues that three messages are required for play: mood signs or direct expressions of particular meaning, e.g., a bite that inflicts pain; simulation of mood signs, e.g., a relatively painless nip; and signals which distinguish the first type of message from the second. The message, "This is play," is of the third type.

According to Bateson, paradox occurs in this metacommunicative puzzle of animal play because the message, "This is play," is a paradox of the Epimenides variety: "A negative statement containing an implicit negative metastatement" (1972, p. 180). Here Bateson hints that the message, "This is play," is formally equivalent to the message, "I am lying." However, his discussion of this point suggests something different. He explains that the

message, "This is play," may be expanded to: "The playful nip denotes the bite, but it does not denote what would be denoted by the bite" (1972, p. 180). This statement violates the Theory of Logical Types and is paradoxical according to Bateson because, "the word 'denote' is being used in two degrees of abstraction and these two uses are treated as synonymous" (1972, p. 180). Bateson seems to be saying that the playful nip functions simultaneously at two levels of abstraction--on a concrete level is the bite which would normally count as hostile, but at a higher level the differences between a bite and a nip, i.e., the playfulness of the act, discounts this message of hostility. It is the confusion of logical types--one message functioning on two levels at once--that makes for paradox and for play.

While Bateson does not refer to the meaning reversals of the Epimenides paradox in describing animal play, Haley's (1955) and Fry's (1963) discussions of the paradoxes of abstraction in human communication focus more on this theme of contradiction. Haley notes that the enjoyment of fantasy, e.g., watching movies, "is based on the fact that the statements within the frame of the fantasy are both true and untrue" (1955, p. 55). Here the emphasis is on the simultaneous truth and falsity of the message within the fantasy frame. Fry argues that the primary context of humor is play and that the creation of this frame, as in animal play, is paradoxical. Fry (1963) admits, however, that the

exact role of paradox in this frame is unknown: "It is not clear just how the never-ending oscillations of a 'vicious circle' paradox result in pleasure to the human organism. But that would seem to be the case" (p. 132).

The conceptual approach to the paradoxes of abstraction presented by Bateson, Haley, and Fry represents an essentially descriptive perspective. They argue that paradox is necessarily present in the construction of certain types of metacommunications, but do not attribute the creation of these abstractions to the formal influence of paradox. This distinction can be lost due to the enthusiasm of these theorists for the concept of paradox and because of the significance attributed to it. Bateson (1972), for example, writes that

> without these paradoxes the evolution of communication would be at an end. Life would then be an endless interchange of stylized messages, a game with rigid rules, unrelieved by change or humor [p. 193].

Here Bateson verges on ascribing the development of metacommunication to the influence of paradox, but in general, the paradoxes of abstraction were described as necessary outcomes and not causal forces in metacommunication.

A formal critique of the paradoxes of abstraction depends on the interpretation of Bateson's regrettably ambiguous presentation. (Haley and Fry follow Bateson so closely, they will not be discussed separately here.) On

the one hand, it is easy to see that the message, "This is play," taken out of context may be considered paradoxical and if Epimenides had said, "I am playing," there would be no logical way to determine his meaning. If he was serious, he was playing and if was playing, he was serious. In context, however, the message, "This is play," is not paradoxical because it does not refer to itself, but rather to ongoing behavior. Further, this message can be considered a nonproblematic abstraction derived from the observed difference between the nip and the bite. The result is contradictory double-level communication in which the higher level message functions in a relatively stable fashion to significantly modify the meaning of lower level behavior.

An alternative interpretation of Bateson's analysis suggests a different problem. It would appear that what Bateson considered paradoxical about certain types of context was the confusion between one level of abstraction and another. He seemed to believe that play, humor, ritual, and art all make functional use of this confusion by implicitly expressing the contradiction, "This act is both real and unreal." Of course, this sense of paradox dissolves when the idea of distinct levels of abstraction is invoked. The nip generates a context which modifies the interpretation of the nip--two contextual levels are in contradiction but there is no necessary ambiguity or

confusion.

Because Bateson, Haley, and Fry basically present a descriptive approach in outlining the paradoxes of abstraction, it is unnecessary to critique the idea of the formal influence of paradox. What may be noted is that the work of these theorists, especially Bateson, presented paradox as a key focus for attention in understanding communication. Perhaps by association, paradox took on an aura of significance that would later assume the characteristics of formal determinism. At the same time, the formal application of the concept was so confusing as to open the field to loose and formally unrigorous use of the concept of paradox.

Harris's (1980) study was designed to explore the reciprocal relationship between social reality and communication through an in-depth analysis of one normal couple. To her apparent surprise, she discovered that this couple operated according to several contradictory rules. For example, in daily conflicts, each partner insisted upon change from the other--she demanded more affection and appreciation while he asked her to be less nagging and critical--but in the couple's major confrontations, these sources of dissatisfaction were labeled unchangeable personality traits which must be accepted. Another contradiction occurred during these confrontation sessions because the couple understood their willingness to undergo

the agonizing process of sorting through their conflicts as their greatest strength. Therefore, during these episodes, the hostile content of the exchange was contextualized by the positive sense of commitment and concern.

Harris's assessment of her study couple's dynamics shows wonderful insight into their relational contradictions. For the present discussion, it is significant that she connects these contradictions to logical paradox and also asserts that it is this logic which frustrates the couple: "An unrecognized paradoxical logic will restrict episodic equifinality (behavioral choices)" (1980, p. 32).

Unfortunately, Harris fails to clarify how the contradictions she describes contain the self-reflexivity of logical paradox. The first rule of the couple about the necessity and impossibility of change expresses a contradiction which unfolds over time. Self-reflexivity and the generation of meaning reversals are not involved. The second rule defining a hostile confrontation as friendly in nature may be understood as a paradox of abstraction. Contradictory messages are arranged in a stable contextual hierarchy such that the episodic meaning is clear. Harris's assertion that the couple's episodes were restricted by a paradoxical logic is consistent with the trend in the literature to ascribe formal influence to communication described as paradoxical.

The strange loop

The strange loop is a concept developed by Hofstadter (1979) to refer to a range of reflexive phenomena including logical paradoxes present in hierarchical systems of meaning. It was introduced into the communications literature by Pearce and Cronen (1980) in the context of their Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory of human communication. Originally, Pearce and Cronen used the strange loop concept in the broad sense conveyed by Hofstadter, but they also focussed on the concept's application to self-consciousness in scientific investigation, the fact that

> if humans look closely enough at any phenomenon, they will see their own reflections and their own intellectual fingerprints, which must themselves be understood as part of that phenomenon [1980, p. 2].

Note that in moving to identify issues of consciousness, Pearce and Cronen imply an equation of this problem with logical paradox of the Epimenides variety.

Later, Cronen and Lannamann (Note 2) shifted from using the strange loop concept in a generic sense to the use of the apparently equivalent term, "reflexivity," again defined through reference to logical paradox. The change in terms was accompanied by a change in content focus as well. Now the CMM researchers asked the question Bateson asked: "'where do contexts come from?'" (Cronen and Lannamann, Note 2, p. 3). Their conceptual framework posits the

emergence of contextual frames out of interaction which subsequently serve to modify the meaning of the interaction.

Building on this approach, Cronen, Johnson, and Lannamann (1982) have recently presented a detailed formal system within CMM theory for understanding reflexivity in communication. They define reflexivity as existing "whenever two elements in a hierarchy are so organized that each is simultaneously the context for and within the context of the other" (Cronen et al., 1982, p. 95; emphasis in the original). The strange loop is so named because the particular elements in the reflexive relationship are intransitive, i.e., the meaning of the communication changes depending on which level of meaning is seen as the context for the other.

Cronen et al. (1982) are somewhat ambiguous on the question of whether the strange loop is a paradox. They write that paradoxes are reflexive loops, but do not say explicitly whether all reflexive loops including strange loops are paradoxical. The implication is that reflexivity is synonymous with paradox, but that the significance of this formal configuration is negotiated in a social context such that "only certain subclasses of loops are problematic for social actors" (Cronen et al., 1982, p. 92). For both the issues of form and formal determinism it will be assumed that Cronen et al. (1982) see the strange loop as paradoxical in form.

An example of the strange loop discussed by Cronen et al. (1982) is the developing romantic relationship between Bob, and his friend, Jane. After several affectionate episodes, Bob believes that his relationship with Jane is committed and close. Accordingly, he takes the opportunity on a subsequent date to express his warm feelings to Jane. She, in turn, responds disconcertingly by making a joke. Bob's dilemma is that if he sees a close-committed relationship as the context for the joke, then Jane must be kidding him because the relationship is so secure that jokes are O.K. If, however, the episode of Jane's kidding is seen as the context for the relationship, then Jane is probably distancing and the relationship is not close and committed. Cronen et al. (1982) describe this situation as a strange loop because it is equally likely for the episode to be the context for the relationship as the reverse and it makes a big difference, especially to Bob, which way it goes.

A second example of a strange loop was recently presented by Vernon Cronen at the 1983 Participant's Conference in Structural, Strategic, and Systemic Family Therapy (Note 1). Referring to Bateson's (1972) paper on the alcoholic's battle with drinking and with Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Cronen noted that a vicious-circle pattern of meaning shifts may be identified in this context. If the alcoholic accepts the AA life-script label of alcoholism, s/he will no longer drink. Repeated episodes of sobriety

may then come to contextualize and reverse the AA life-script label. How can the person be an alcoholic if s/he never drinks? Once the life-script changes, then drinking itself is redefined from being unacceptable to being acceptable. The uncontrolling drinking episodes which inevitably follow then build towards the individual's re-acceptance of the AA life-script label which results in abstinence. This brings the person full circle and the cycle may begin again.

This cycle may be described as a strange loop because the oscillation which occurs derives from the ambiguity of contextual levels. Within the life-script of an AA alcoholic, abstinence is stably defined not as a sign of control but as a sign of lack of control over drinking. A strange loop occurs if this contextualization is not accepted by the drinker; abstinence becomes the context and the life-script of being an alcoholic is rejected. Should this contextualization stabilize, the person may continue out-of-control drinking without ever accepting the life-script label of alcoholic. But in many cases, the problem drinking does become the context and the life-script of AA alcoholic emerges to redefine drinking as impossible. The ambiguity of contextual levels characteristic of the strange loop is well reflected in this continuing cycle.

With regard to formal determinism, Cronen et al. (1982) do suggest that under certain conditions, "strange loops

produce adverse personal and social consequences" (p. 105). This statement hints that the authors see the strange loop not only as a descriptive device but also as having a causal influence on interaction. They imply that it is not relational confusion which creates the strange loop, but rather the strange loop which creates relational confusion. This theoretical tendency in Cronen et al's. (1982) work, however, is counterbalanced by their explicit rejection of the idea that any reflexive form is necessarily problematic. Thus these authors appear to be at a point of questioning the issue of formal determinism without being quite willing yet to give it up altogether.

A formal critique of the CMM discussion of reflexivity and the strange loop as paradoxical derives from the distinction between self-reflexivity and emergent reflexivity. The former describes the formal structure of logical paradox--a negative statement which functions simultaneously as the contextual and the contextualized message. What the CMM theorists describe as reflexive communication is emergent in structure. Out of interaction, a context is abstracted which then qualifies subsequent interaction. The passage of time prevents the self-reflexivity of logical paradox. Formally, then, the CMM concept of the strange loop may be described as a kind of contradictory double-level communication. Two messages opposed in meaning are balanced hierarchically such that

ambiguity results unless additional information is provided. Note that this balance does not operate like a logical paradox in which meaning reversals are entailed. In the example given above, if Bob sees a close-committed relationship as the context for Jane's kidding, he is faced with one meaning for her behavior,but this does not logically entail the reverse meaning. If he sees her kidding as the context for their relationship, he is faced with another meaning, but again this meaning does not reverse once it is identified.

The CMM theorists provide their own implicit critique of paradox as formally deterministic through their emphasis on the social construction of meaning in communication. Therefore, no comment on this theme is needed here.

## The double bind

The original paper. In 1956, Bateson's Palo Alto research group published their famous article, "Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia" (Bateson et al., 1972). This paper departs from a consideration of the parallel between levels of abstraction in Logical-Types Theory and levels of meaning in human communication. The authors argue that meaning is expressed and understood within a hierarchy of learned communication modes. The negotiation of these modes or contexts provides a descriptive frame for a variety of communicational phenomena including play, humor, deception,

learning, and schizophrenia.

In ordinary communication, a message is interpreted within a context of mode identifying signals. For example, the hostile message, "You're a lousy cook," may be delivered during a cogenial social interaction (say, after an outstanding meal which the cook insists is nothing special) and in a friendly tone of voice such that the message counts as teasing, not angry. Bateson et al. (1972) noted that a schizophrenic might have difficulty interpreting this kind of message either by taking it literally as an insult or in an over-abstract manner as, for example, a mysterious ritualistic sign of acknowledgement.

The schizophrenic's difficulty interpreting messages at the proper level of meaning was thought by Bateson et al. (1972) to be an adaptive response to a developmental context characterized by double-bind communication. With respect to the etiology of schizophrenia, Bateson et al. (1972) defined the double bind in terms of a number of specific "ingredients" including a vital relationship context in which the recipient is confronted with contradictory negative injunctions delivered at different levels of communication. When the recipient takes one message as context for the other and responds to it, she or he is punished; yet when the recipient reacts to this information and takes the second message as context for the first, his or her subsequent action is also punished. This drives the

recipient back to the first contextual orientation, she or he is punished for this interpretation and so on. Additional injunctions prohibit comment on the contradictory communication and escape from the relationship. According to the authors, the only solution to this dilemma is to falsify external or internal communication, i.e., to become schizophrenic.

The classic example of the double bind involves a mother's visit with her hospitalized schizophrenic son. When he hugs her, she stiffens, communicating nonverbally a request for distance. When the son responds by backing off, she asks, "'Don't you love me anymore?'" (Bateson et al., 1972, p. 217) thereby communicating a request for closeness. The contradictory double-level communication consists of: (1) a nonverbal injunction to maintain distance and (2) a verbal injunction to approach. If the son responds to one injunction, he is punished for disobeying the second injunction and if he responds to the second injunction, he is punished for disobeying the first. The contextual arrangement of the contradictory double-level communication reverses depending on the recipient's behavior.

Since the original double bind paper is about contradiction, it is ironic that it contains its own contradiction. On the one hand, the double bind is presented as an enduring and inescapable learning context in schizophrenia. On the other hand, the double bind is also

defined and discussed as the mere existence of contradictory double-level communication in a significant relationship which prohibits comment on the contradiction. This definition omits several of the most important characteristics of the first definition including the necessity of repeated experience, punishment for obeying either of the contradictory injunctions and the inability to leave the field. The example provided by Bateson et al. (1972) of the second definition of the double bind is accordingly very different. They refer to an incident in which an employee goes home early and a fellow employee calls him up and asks, "'Well, how did you get <u>there</u>?'" (Bateson et al., 1972, p. 209; emphasis in the original). Here the two contradictory messages are delivered at the episodic and at the speech act level (Pearce and Cronen, 1980). If the episode--leaving early--is taken as context for the question, then the question counts as a nonliteral inquiry into the employee's reasons for leaving early. However, if the question is taken as context for the episode, the question counts as a literal one and the episode as innocuous. In the actual example, this is the interpretation the employee chose; therefore he responded to the question with the answer, "'By automobile'" (Bateson et al., 1972, p. 209). While the employee may have been uncomfortable in this situation, he was not being exposed to the wrenching disconfirmation theorized to occur in the

schizophrenogenic family.

Additional conceptual ambiguity is conveyed by Bateson et al.'s (1972) application of the double bind to positive learning contexts such as Zen instruction and psychotherapy. The defining element of these widely ranging examples of the double bind is the existence of contradictory communication. For the most part, this contradiction is described as occurring between levels of communication, but the Zen instruction and therapy examples show sequential contradiction which is not accompanied by contradiction between levels of meaning. This implicit focus on the formal description of contradictory communication tends to minimize the fact that this form is negotiated by social actors in powerful ways. This implies a belief that the form itself is powerful.

The double bind and paradox: the original authors. From the foregoing discussion, it should be apparent that despite the common assumption in the literature that the double bind constitutes a paradox, it was not so described originally. There are various reasons why the double bind has been mistaken for paradox and these will be discussed here.

One reason for the equation of the double bind and paradox is that Bateson's Palo Alto research group's first project was on the paradoxes of abstraction discussed above. Further, when funding availability encouraged the group to

focus on schizophrenia, the grant application which led to the double bind formulation was phrased in terms of the "'paradox'" which is "'generated when both learning and deutero-learning (learning about learning) are, in some sense negative'" (Bateson, in Haley, 1976, p. 67). After the receipt of this grant, according to Haley (1976), the term, paradox, was exchanged for the term, double bind. Unfortunately, Haley fails to explain the rationale for this change. One other implied equation of the double bind and paradox by the original authors is found in the only other paper they wrote together (Bateson, Jackson, Haley, and Weakland, 1963). After noting their central interest in Russellian paradoxes present in communication, they refer to the double bind as a "learning context which included formal sequences where he (the pre-schizophrenic patient) was forced to respond to messages which generated paradoxes of this type" (p. 155). The implication is that the double bind and Russellian paradox are equivalent terms.

Independent work by the original double-bind authors suggests two distinct positions on whether the double bind represents a paradox. Significantly, Bateson appears never to have described the double bind as a paradox except in the jointly authored paper mentioned above. Instead he retained a focus on contradictory double-level communication and continued to extend the application of this form, for example, to animal learning and creativity, disinformation

in WWII, and even to the problem of why mountain climbers climb mountains (1978).

Bateson responded to conceptual and empirical criticisms of the double bind by asserting that, "The concept of the 'double bind' is really not a theory but more like a new language" (1966, p. 415; emphasis in the original). For Bateson, the double bind appears to have been a way of thinking about contradiction in the hierarchical organization of communication. He apparently understood logical paradox to be an intriguing model for this type of contradiction, but the double bind seemed to offer a more robust conceptual form and so he chose to work with it.

In contrast with Bateson's move away from the conceptualization of the double bind as a paradox, the other double-bind authors emphasized this equivalence. The identification of the double bind as paradoxical was accomplished by these authors essentially through a redefinition of the double bind. It will be useful to address this point briefly in the work of Haley and the work of Jackson and Weakland in collaboration with Watzlawick and other Mental Research Institute (MRI) associates.

Haley clearly equated the double bind with paradox; his description of the double bind in 1961 (published in 1976) is very nearly replicated in his description of paradox in 1963. Interestingly, in both these presentations, Haley

attempts to show the pragmatic problems generated by the double bind or paradox. In each case he begins by defining the communication form (i.e., the double bind or paradox) in terms of contradictory messages delivered at different levels of abstraction. Then he asserts that because this contradiction exists between different levels of abstraction, it is no ordinary contradiction, but one which prevents a response. Significantly, Haley does not explain why contradiction between messages of different levels of abstraction is more problematic than other contradictions, but instead presents the "Disobey me" paradox as if it were an equivalent form and reasons from the meaning reversals it generates to support his argument that the double bind or paradox is no simple contradiction. To further support his position that the double bind or paradox is impossible to respond to, Haley presents the "Be spontaneous" injunction as an example of this type of communication. The problem with Haley's argument is that he moves from describing two contradictory messages expressed at different levels of abstraction to an example, "Disobey me," of one negative message functioning at two levels of abstraction simultaneously. This represents a subtle, yet significant formal redefinition of the double bind, one which allows reference to the meaning reversals of paradox in support of the pragmatic impossibility of responding to such an injunction. Regarding the use of the "Be spontaneous"

injunction as a second example of the impossibility of responding to a double bind or paradox, note that this message may be described formally in a least two distinct ways as is shown in a subsequent section. Suffice to say for the current argument that neither of these is a double bind.

The redefinition of the double bind as paradoxical by Jackson and Weakland in collaboration with Watzlawick and other MRI associates is presented most explicitly in Pragmatics of Human Communication (Watzlawick et al., 1967). Following the style (not the substance) of the original paper, three "ingredients" of the double bind are presented. Significantly, the presence of primary and secondary negative injunctions is changed to a self-reflexive negative assertion:

> In such a context, a message is given that (a) it asserts something, (b) it asserts something about its own assertion and (c) these two assertions are mutually exclusive. Thus, if the message is an injunction, it must be disobeyed to be obeyed; it if is a definition of self or other, the person thereby defined is this kind of person only if he is not and is not if he is [Watzlawick et al., 1967, p. 212].

Watzlawick et al. emphasize that the double bind is a paradox and in doing so shift to a focus on the logical meaning reversals entailed by paradox rather than the enforcement of a no-win situation through conflicting negative injunctions. In subsequent work by Watzlawick and his colleagues including Weakland (Watzlawick, 1976; Watzlawick, Weakland, and Fisch, 1974), the double bind is

always treated as a paradox.

Before proceeding, it should be noted that the equation of the double bind and paradox presented by Haley, Watzlawick, Jackson, Weakland and others appears to have been motivated by the desire to present the double bind as formally distinct from other communication types. This formal distinction was presented in terms of the meaning reversals of paradox--these were considered responsible for making any response impossible. The emphasis on formal determinism is clear.

The double bind and paradox: the larger field. Early conceptual work on the double bind by researchers other than the original authors shows an inconsistent description of the double bind as paradoxical. This, of course, follows naturally from the conceptual confusion described above. Some authors (e.g., Ferreira, 1960) extended the contradictory double-level communication form to other family interaction patterns, while others emphasized the paradoxical nature of the double bind. Sluzki, Beavin, Tarnopolsky, and Verón (1977), for example, described a communication pattern called transactional disqualification in which sequential statements in family sessions were shown to manifest a lack of clear acknowledgement for the speaker. They described this pattern as a double bind which they stated is a paradox. Sluzki and Verón (1971) discuss the "Be spontaneous" injunction as a universal pathogenic

communication and clearly assert that it is a paradox and a double bind.

In contrast with early conceptual work, early experimental work on the double bind tended to emphasize the "ingredients" definition of the double bind although there was no explicit rejection of the idea that the double bind is a paradox (Abeles, 1976).

Not surprisingly, reviewers of double bind research have criticized the lack of clarity and specificity in a concept which applies to so many disparate situations (Mishler and Waxler, 1966; Olson, 1972; Schuham, 1967). But it appears that Schuham is the only reviewer to distinguish the definition of the double bind as contradictory double-level communication and as paradox. While noting the difference between the double bind in which a correct choice is described as impossible and paradox in which choice itself is described as impossible, Schuham does not pursue the implications of this distinction.

Interestingly, several recent conceptual and empirical treatments of the double bind have stressed the importance of paradox. Abeles (1976), Ackerman (1979) and Rabkin (1976) all present reformulations of the double bind with a focus on paradox and relationship. Abeles (1976) asserts that, "Double bind theory is about relationships, and what happens when important basic relationships are chronically subjected to invalidation through paradoxical interaction"

(pp. 115-116; emphasis in the original). Ackerman (1979) suggests that the double bind represents a "relational paradox" in which "the logical-type error is buried in an interactional sequence" (p. 30). Rabkin (1976) proposes that the double bind is not a single paradox which he argues is a request for systems change, but rather two paradoxical injunctions which contradict each other. The point here is that rather than becoming less associated with logical paradox over time, the double bind appears to be increasingly recast in terms of paradox.

The definition of the double bind as paradoxical has prompted two empirical studies in which the effects of paradoxical injunctions were investigated (Abeles, 1975; Guindon, 1971). Notably, Guindon differentiated two types of double binds--paradoxes and multilevel contradictory communication. Both studies compared groups based on psychopathology on their responses to paradoxical items. Abeles found no support for differential difficulty of paradoxical items while Guindon found that paradoxical items compared with bimodal contradictory communication were seen as more sincere, but more difficult to respond to. Note that these studies of paradoxical injunctions posit that the logic of paradox creates a pragmatic paralysis of response.

Critique. A formal critique of the double bind as paradox depends, of course,on the definition of the double bind. An attempt has been made to show that the double bind

was first defined as contradictory double-level communication and that it only later came to be identified with paradox, specifically with the "Disobey me" paradox and the "Be spontaneous" injunction. These latter two forms will be dealt with separately below and this discussion will focus on the original "ingredients" definition of the double bind.

The double bind constitutes a pragmatic, but not a formal paradox. This situation may be diagrammed in terms of the contradictory negative injunctions and the recipient's possible responses as shown in Figure 1. This diagram shows that the recipient's compliance with one of the injunctions simultaneously counts as defiance of the other injunction. In a formal sense, no matter what response is attempted, the recipient is simultaneously compliant and defiant. Paradox-like meaning reversals rather than simple contradiction is generated in the double bind by the rule that only the defiant aspect of the response is recognized by the person who delivers the injunctions. The recipient takes one injunction as context and attempts to comply with it, but the defiance of the second injunction provokes punishment which is a message that the second injunction is context for the first. The recipient's attempt to respond to this injunction as context for the first provokes a similar meaning reversal and so back and forth. But this vicious circle is powered by the

| Recipient's Responses | Contradictory Negative Injunctions | |
|---|---|---|
| | Do x or I'll punish you. | Don't do x or I'll punish you. |
| Does x | Compliant | Defiant |
| Does not do x | Defiant | Compliant |

Figure 1. Pragmatics of the double bind.

pragmatics of punishment and not the logic of paradox. A formal paradox is not present because two distinct messages are delivered at different levels of abstraction rather than a single self-reflexive negative injunction.

This leads us to the problem of formal determinism. It seems clear that the double bind was redefined as a paradox by Haley, Watzlawick, Jackson, and Weakland in order to support a formally deterministic view of pathogenic communication. They all argued specifically that the double bind represents a paradoxical form of communication which makes any response impossible. This position will be examined below in the sections which deal with formally impossible and formally paradoxical communication types, i.e., involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests.

With respect to formal determinism and the double bind as originally defined the issues are not so clear. Bateson (1978) later noted that, "Already in 1956 . . . we knew that double binds were powerful, not only in a destructive or painful sense, but also in a 'therapeutic' sense" (p. 57). But in what sense did Bateson understand the power of the double bind? Clearly his interest was in the description of formal pattern, but these formal patterns were often constituted by rules for action and response. Especially the double bind represents a formal configuration defined by pragmatic injunctions, "Do what I say or else." The

question remains as to whether Bateson considered these pragmatic injunctions to be reciprocally defined by their formal configuration. One is tempted to conclude that some such mutual defining relationship between form and power is what he had in mind.

## The Special Case of the "Be Spontaneous" Paradox

For most systems theorists, "Be spontaneous," is a defining example of a paradoxical injunction because of the assumption that a person cannot comply with a request spontaneously. Perhaps because of its definitional role, the term, spontaneous, has been used to refer to many types of behavior ranging from symptoms (Haley, 1963) to domination (Harris, Cronen, and McNamee[3]) to enjoyment (Watzlawick et al., 1974).

For the present formal analysis, it is necessary to distinguish two contrasting meanings of "spontaneous," one which corresponds more closely to involuntary behavior and one which corresponds more closely to noncompliant behavior. In Webster's New World Dictionary (1974), the sense of spontaneous as involuntary is given by the first definition: "acting in accordance with or resulting from a natural feeling, impulse, or tendency, without any constraint, effort, or premeditation" (p. 1376). Note that "spontaneous" and "involuntary" still refer to distinct

experiences. When one acts impulsively, one may feel carried away and lack a sense of purposefulness; but when one behaves involuntarily, the experience is one of compulsion, of having to do a certain thing.

The second definition of "spontaneous" given by Webster's New World Dictionary (1974) focuses on the feature of self-determination as opposed to compliance: "having no apparent external cause or influence; occurring or produced by its own energy, force, etc. or through internal causes; self-acting" (p. 1376). In this sense spontaneous behavior cannot be compliant and could refer to independent, disobedient, or dominant behavior. Again, note that each of these behaviors has a specific and distinctive meaning of its own.

The reason for distinguishing the meaning of "spontaneous" as involuntary and as noncompliant is that requests for these behaviors entail distinct formal implications. As will be seen below, the former is not paradoxical in form while the latter is.

## The Request for Involuntary Behavior

Involuntary behavior is passively experienced and includes emotions, psychological symptoms, and hypnotic trance phenomena. The request for involuntary behavior has been described as paradoxical because of the apparent

contradiction involved in asking someone to do something that cannot be done on purpose. This contradiction has led theorists to argue that such requests in ordinary relationships are necessarily frustrating and potentially pathogenic. If a father tells his daughter that she should enjoy studying, a compliant response may not be acceptable; he may think she only studies because she has been told to and not because she really enjoys it. In therapy, the presumed impossibility of complying with a request for involuntary behavior has been used strategically in the form of "symptom prescription." An anxious patient may be told to make an effort to be even more anxious; the difficulty of being anxious on purpose may inhibit the symptom. Finally, the basic request in hypnotic trance induction is for involuntary behavior. Interestingly, in this context, the request is negotiated in such a way that the involuntary response is not inhibited, but is actually produced. The hypnotist tells the subject his or her arm will lift and when the arm rises, the response is experienced as involuntary by the subject.

The application of a formal definition of paradox to the request for involuntary behavior has been advanced primarily by Haley and Watzlawick and his colleagues. Haley (1958) first presented a formal analysis of involuntary behavior requests in hypnosis; at that time he described such requests as double binds. As mentioned above, Haley

(1963) later substituted paradox for the double bind and in Strategies of Psychotherapy he conceptualized the function of involuntary behavior as paradoxical in the definition of ordinary, hypnotic, and therapy relationships. Somewhat later, Watzlawick and his colleagues (Watzlawick, 1976, Watzlawick et al., 1967, Watzlawick et al., 1974) also argued that the request for involuntary behavior is formally paradoxical. Their emphasis was on ordinary and therapeutic communication.

In therapeutic contexts, the request for involuntary behavior, i.e., symptom prescription, has been discussed by theorists representing behavioral, humanistic-existential, and family systems perspectives (Newton, 1968; Rabkin, 1977; Raskin and Klein, 1976). The behavioral (Dunlap, 1928, 1930, 1942) and humanistic-existential (Frankl, 1960, 1975) approaches to understanding symptom prescription have not made use of formal definitions of paradox or the formal influence of paradox. In family systems treatments of therapeutic paradox, the work of Haley and Watzlawick and his colleagues has been extremely influential and their publications are typically cited as standard references. However, it is important to note that most family systems discussions of therapeutic paradox have not emphasized the formal analysis presented by Haley and Watzlawick and his colleagues. Instead, these family systems explanations of therapeutic paradox have focussed on various other factors

including the redefinition of the symptom (Papp, 1981; Selvini Palazolli et al., 1978), the provocation of patient resistance (Tennen, Press, Rohrbaugh, White, 1981), and more recently the nature of the whole family system's orientation to change (DeShazer, 1982; Hoffman, 1981; Stanton, 1981).

In fact, the definite rejection of a formal analysis of therapeutic paradox by family systems theorists is suggested by the reactions to Dell's (1981) recent critique of formal confusions in the explanation of therapeutic paradox. While Watzlawick (1981) endorses the value of formal clarification, Selvini Palazolli (1981) frankly admits that the question of what is a "real paradox" is of no interest to her and her colleagues, and Jesse and L'Abate (1981) assert a similar indifference toward formal issues in favor of a focus on the "phenomenological world view of the client" (p. 43). The present critique of the paradoxical communication literature is based on a similar objection to the relevance of formal paradox as a determining factor in human interaction, but it is also believed that because of its importance in the field, this issue deserves a critical review rather than a simple rejection.

In this section, Haley's conceptualization of the request for involuntary behavior in hypnosis is reviewed first. Following this, Haley's and Watzlawick and his colleagues' views on therapeutic paradox are discussed. While Haley refers to the request for involuntary behavior

as paradoxical in ordinary relationships, it is Watzlawick and his colleagues who have provided the more elaborate conceptualization of this type of communication. Therefore, their work on this topic provides the basis for the discussion of the request for involuntary behavior in ordinary relationships. A recent and distinctive approach by Rabkin (1976, 1977) to involuntary behavior requests in ordinary relationships is also discussed.

## The request for involuntary behavior in hypnosis

Haley's discussion of the interactional dynamics of hypnosis emphasizes the ways in which the hypnotist maintains control of the definition of the relationship with the subject. He also argues that the hypnotic injunction as a request for involuntary behavior is formally equivalent to the "Disobey me" paradox. Essentially, he accomplishes this through asserting the contradictory nature of the request for involuntary behavior:

> Indeed whenever one requests 'involuntary' behavior from another person he is inevitably requesting that the subject do something and simultaneously requesting that he not do it [1963, pp. 33-34].

Haley implies that this contradiction is between levels of abstraction and with this assertion basically arrives at the definition of the double bind or paradox previously discussed. As in his treatment of double-bind or paradoxical communication, Haley then cites as an example,

the "Disobey me" injunction, noting the respondent's dilemma: "If he obeys, he is disobeying and if he disobeys, he is obeying" (1963, p. 35).

While Haley focuses on the hypnotist's interpersonal skill in negotiating the subject's resistance to the trance induction, he also clearly asserts the formal influence of paradox in hypnosis. Interestingly, he does not directly refer to the meaning reversals of the "Disobey me" paradox in supporting this view (this is implied) but instead to contradictory (presumably) double-level communication:

> If one is asked to do something and simultaneously asked not to do it, one cannot refuse to follow suggestions. If the subject responds or if he does not respond he is doing what the hypnotist requests . . . [1963, p. 36; emphasis added].

The important point to be drawn from this is Haley's emphasis on the formal nature of the hypnotic injunction and power of this form--the subject cannot resist.

The formal critique of Haley's assertion that the request for involuntary behavior is paradoxical is that nowhere does he show how such a request represents a self-reflexive negative statement. Haley writes that the request for involuntary behavior is contradictory. The subject is told to do something and simultaneously told not to do something. This is an interesting assertion, but it might be more accurate to say, as in fact Haley does, that the subject is "influenced to do what he is told and simultaneously deny that he is doing anything" (1963, p. 33;

emphasis in the original). This slightly distinct version of the request captures the contradictory aspect of the request for involuntary behavior without recourse to an artificial description in terms of contradictory double-level communication. In any case, as we have already seen in the discussion of Haley's analysis of the double bind as a paradox, the mere presence of contradictory double-level communication does not necessarily generate paradox.

Regarding formal determinism, Haley's own discussion of hypnosis provides the best grounds for rejecting paradox itself as influencing interaction. This is because Haley shows that the formally impossible request for involuntary behavior does not necessarily prevent a successful response but rather may be negotiated in such a way that an involuntary response is actually achieved. It is puzzling that Haley should have continued to emphasize the determining power of paradox when he so clearly described the different ways these requests could be managed. In ordinary interaction, as we have sen in the section on the double bind, Haley argued that a paradoxical request is inherently pathogenic, while in hypnosis, he described no such disruption. The question remains, why didn't Haley see that requests for involuntary behavior might have positive results in ordinary relationships parallel to those observed in hypnosis?

The request for involuntary behavior in therapy

Haley (1963, 1973) discusses two distinct uses of the request for involuntary behavior in a therapy context. First, he refers to traditional therapeutic modalities such as psychoanalysis where the basic instruction to free associate represents a request for involuntary behavior. Here the use of the request for involuntary behavior is the same as in hypnosis and the responses of the analyst are designed, perhaps implicitly, to arrange for the patient to actually comply with the request and to "involuntarily" say whatever comes to mind.

The second application of the therapeutic request for involuntary behavior discussed by Haley is the strategic prescription of symptomatic behavior. In explaining this injunction, Haley (1963) refers to the hypnotist's encouragement of resistance in the subject. For example, when a subject resists a suggestion to become drowsy by maintaining an alert, vigilant attitude, the hypnotist may encourage this very wakefulness. The goal here is two-fold. If the subject continues to oppose the hypnotist, this must be accomplished by becoming drowsy which is the intended goal. If the subject remains wakeful, this now is defined as a compliant response--the hypnotist's authority is re-established and the trance induction may proceed via an alternate suggestion.

Although Haley does not acknowledge this, it would

appear that his shift to describing the therapeutic request for involuntary behavior in terms of the hypnotist's encouragement of resistance is necessitated by the fact that these directives are designed to either provoke an oppositional response or to maintain the authority of the hypnotist or therapist. In contrast, the more typical hypnotic request for involuntary behavior is designed to be fulfilled. This may be seen in Haley's explanation of symptom prescription. Haley writes that when the therapist prescribes the symptom, the patient cannot continue to use the symptom to control the therapy relationship, i.e., defeat the therapist's efforts to help the patient change:

> If the patient continues with his symptoms, he is conceding that he is following therapeutic directions; if he ceases his symptomatic behavior, he is conceding that he is following the therapist's directions since this is the larger goal of the therapist [1963, p. 54].

Here Haley resolves the request for involuntary behavior into contradictory double-level messages; at the level of the relationship, the message is "change," while at the level of the intervention, the message is "don't change." What Haley does not address is that the second message itself is a request for involuntary behavior. In any case, it is important to note that with respect to form, Haley's identification of the symptom prescription with the "Disobey me" paradox is more implied than explicit.

Watzlawick et al. (1967) basically follow Haley's analysis in explaining the request for involuntary behavior

in therapy. They describe symptom prescription interchangeably as a therapeutic double bind or paradox and write that it represents a contradictory double-level injunction to change and not to change. Further, they point to the fact that if the patient produces a symptom on request, by definition the behavior is no longer symptomatic: "If he complies, he no longer 'can't help it' he does 'it,' and this as we have tried to show, makes 'it' impossible which is the purpose of therapy" (Watzlawick et al., 1967, p. 241). Thus, if the patient resists the injunction, change occurs and if the patient complies with the injunction, change occurs. Significantly, Watzlawick et al. do not explicitly draw the formal connection between therapeutic symptom prescription and paradox per se; this is implied.

Both Haley's and Watzlawick and his colleagues' discussions of therapeutic symptom prescription deemphasize the formal parallel with paradox while emphasizing the pragmatic inescapability of the intervention. Haley appears convinced that it is the logic of the contradictory double-level request which forces compliance from the patient. No matter what the patient does, he or she is conceding compliance with the therapist's directives. Watzlawick et al. (1967) refer to symptom prescription as "the most complex and powerful interventions know to us" and comment that "it is difficult to imagine that symptomatic double

binds can be broken by anything other than counter double binds" (p. 240). They too assert the inevitability of change following a therapeutic symptom prescription, writing that: "If in a pathogenic double bind the patient is 'damned if he does and damned if he doesn't,' in a therapeutic double bind he is 'changed if he does and changed if he doesn't'" (p. 241).

It may be that the formal similarity between the therapeutic request for involuntary behavior and paradox is only implied by Haley and Watzlawick et al. because of the differences between these two communication types. While the request for involuntary behavior represents a formally impossible request in that it asks for behavior which cannot be produced on purpose, it does not represent a negative self-reflexive statement and the meaning reversals which result from the effort to comply with such a request do not occur.

Regarding formal determinism, both Haley and Watzlawick discuss the symptom prescription in terms of a contradictory double-level message which forces compliance at one level or the other. Neither addresses the fact that such double-level requests make defiance as necessary as compliance or the fact that this could be therapeutically damaging. In addition, Watzlawick et al. focus on the formal impossibility of complying with the request for involuntary behavior. Both authors emphasize formal determinism rather

than the pragmatic negotiation of the request for involuntary behavior.

The request for involuntary behavior in ordinary relationships. As mentioned above, it is Watzlawick and his colleagues at MRI (Watzlawick et al., 1967; Watzlawick et al., 1974) who have most explicitly addressed the request for involuntary behavior in ordinary relationships. In Pragmatics of Human Communication, they (Watzlawick et al., 1967) describe a number of "Be spontaneous" paradoxes which include particular requests for emotional, i.e., involuntary (Averill, 1980a, 1980b), responses. Examples of these requests are, "You ought to love me," and "You should enjoy playing with the children, just like other fathers" (p. 200). Later, in Change, they (Watzlawick et al., 1974) introduce a chapter on paradox with the example of a mother who explains: "'I think what I am trying to say is: I want Andy to learn to do things, and I want him to do things--but I want him to want to do them'" (p. 62; emphasis in the original). Here the request for the child "to want" to do things is described by Watzlawick et al. (1974) as a "Be spontaneous" request.

Watzlawick and his colleagues explain the paradoxical nature of a request for involuntary behavior in terms of a "be spontaneous" request. They do not explicitly address the request for involuntary behavior per se, but their examples show that they are referring to requests for

involuntary behavior. Watzlawick et al. (1974) assert that the structure of the "Be spontaneous" injunction is the same as the Epimenides paradox:

> It imposes the rule that behavior should not be rule-compliant, but spontaneous. This rule therefore says that compliance with an external rule is unacceptable behavior, since this same behavior should be freely motivated from within. But this basic rule, involving (the class of) all rules, is itself a rule, it is a member of the class and applies to itself [pp. 66-67].

In other words, Watzlawick et al. (1974) propose that the "Be spontaneous" injunction represents a request for non-rule compliant behavior which modifies itself, thus generating paradox.

Watzlawick and his colleagues are probably the most insistent of all the theorists who discuss paradox on the determining influence of the form on interaction. Watzlawick et al. (1967) state that anybody faced with a "Be spontaneous" request is in an "untenable position" (p. 200) and they further assert that, "Where paradox contaminates human relations, disease appears" (p. 201). Notably, Watzlawick and his colleagues focus on the formal and not the pragmatic aspects of paradox, thus indicating that it is the particular form of paradox that creates problems in human relationships and not how these forms are negotiated in a social context.

A formal critique of Watzlawick and his colleagues' description of paradoxical communication departs from the observation that they translate the request for involuntary

behavior first into a request for spontaneous behavior and then into a request for noncompliant behavior. As discussed in the section on the "Be spontaneous" request, the definition of spontaneity as noncompliance is only one of two possible definitions. Having recast the request for involuntary behavior into a request for noncompliant behavior it is possible to argue that a self-reflexive negative statement is involved, i.e., it is a "Disobey me" paradox. However, while involuntary behavior cannot be compliant behavior it also cannot, by the same token, be noncompliant. For example, a father asks his daughter to bring him a glass of iced tea. If she trips on the way over, the father makes an evaluation of whether or not she could help it. If she couldn't help it, the behavior is considered involuntary and not noncompliant or disobedient.

The position maintained by Watzlawick and his colleagues that the formal structure of the request for involuntary behavior necessarily generates relationship problems must be rejected. Despite a formal impossibility in the request for involuntary behavior, in ordinary relationships, as in hypnosis, such a request may be successfully fulfilled. This is because ongoing behavior is a mixture of active and passive experience and the attribution of activity or passivity to an experience is, in general, determined in a social context (Averill 1980a, 1980b). This means that ongoing behavior is a mixture of

voluntary and involuntary behavior. Consider the example of sleep. This behavior is ordinarily a function of a series of actions--getting undressed, going to bed, turning out the light--and a passive experience of actually falling asleep. While these active and passive behaviors do not necessarily go together, e.g., in the case of insomnia, generally they combine in a highly predictable way. This leads to a second point--namely, that a person may indirectly produce an involuntary behavior by producing the cognitive and physical behaviors which typically form its context. This is the basis for dramatic acting (Fletcher, Note 4) and for the fact that a request for involuntary behavior may be successfully obeyed.

Rabkin proposes a view of involuntary behavior requests in ordinary relationships similar to the one presented here. He, too, argues that such requests are a natural part of everyday interaction and that they are regularly fulfilled. His perspective on these requests, however, emphasizes a formal systems analysis.

Like Watzlawick and his colleagues, Rabkin does not propose an analysis specific to involuntary behavior requests, but rather refers broadly to paradoxical injunctions. His examples--sleep, hypnosis, enjoyment--show that he is concerned with involuntary behavior. Rabkin suggests that the "'I order you to enjoy school' injunction is somewhat like Epimenodes' [sic] paradox in which the man

from Crete tells us that all men from Crete are liars" (1976, p. 293), but never draws the complete formal parallel. This is because the connection between these two "paradoxes" is more evocative than precise--according to Rabkin, both appear to be truthful contradictions.

Rabkin proceeds to argue that the so-called paradoxical injunctions only seem contradictory or absurd because they are the best our language can do with describing the request for systems change. For example, when parents request their child to enjoy school, Rabkin points out that "the goal of the paradoxical injunction is a transformation of the entire personality and not just a developmental improvement" (p. 301). The request signals the desire for change in the system, for a leap to a new level of integration. Rabkin asserts that given such an injunction, an appropriate response may be "achieved," i.e., successfully accomplished. As noted above, Rabkin sees the double bind as a situation in which two requests for systems change contradict each other.

Rabkin's discussion of involuntary behavior requests in ordinary relationships usefully incorporates the common observation of successful negotiation of such requests. In addition, he definitely moves away from the formally deterministic perspective which has been critiqued here. Paradoxical injunctions for involuntary behavior are recast in terms of messages for desired systems change that may or

may not have an effect.

Two critical points respecting Rabkin's analysis may be raised. First, he does not clarify the formal distinctions or similarities between logical paradox and involuntary behavior requests. While he implies less of a connection than theorists like Watzlawick and his colleagues, he still keeps the Epimenides paradox as his starting point and in an appendix to his 1976 article, he reviews aspects of Logical Types Theory and Gödel's refutation in support of the acceptance of paradox in meaning systems. Thus he implies acceptance of the traditional assumption of some close connection between so-called paradoxes in everyday life and logical paradox.

The second problem with Rabkin's analysis is that he does not move beyond a formal analysis of interactions surrounding involuntary behavior requests. He does not explain or consider the possible meanings of various "systems changes" which might be invoked through involuntary behavior requests. Without some better understanding of these content issues, a better understanding of these injunctions is impossible.

## The Request for Noncompliant Behavior

It is Watzlawick and his colleagues (Watzlawick et al., 1967; Watzlawick et al., 1974) who have given the most

attention to the request for noncompliant behavior in the context of ordinary relationships. As noted above, theorists have referred to the "Disobey me" paradox in describing other communication forms as paradoxical, but it is Watzlawick and his colleagues who have provided a more explicit discussion of this injunction itself. Examples of requests for noncompliant behavior include: "'I want you to dominate me' (request of a wife to her passive husband)"; "'Don't be so obedient' (parents to their child whom they consider too dependent on them)" (Watzlawick et al., 1967, p. 200) and "'Be independent'" (Abeles, 1976, p. 119). More recently Hoffman (1980, 1981) has presented a discussion of the "be independent" injunction which closely follows Rabkin's analysis. As her approach departs significantly from the more traditional view of Watzlawick et al., it is discussed separately here.

Watzlawick and his colleagues describe the request for noncompliant behavior as a "Be spontaneous" paradox. As noted above, Watzlawick and his colleagues analyze the request for spontaneous behavior as a request for noncompliant behavior, thus concluding that such a request is a self-reflexive negative statement. Regarding the consequences of a request for noncompliant behavior, the same reasoning reported above by Watzlawick and his colleagues for the effects of the request for involuntary behavior applies. In short, they see this type of request

as highly problematical in ordinary relationships.

In contrast with the communication forms described above, the request for noncompliant behavior is formally paradoxical. The defining example is "Disobey me" which has already been discussed. For requested behaviors like independence and dominance, formal paradox occurs because these injunctions are self-reflexive, they modify themselves. Thus, when I tell you to be independent, your compliance with this request qualifies as dependent behavior--you're doing what I tell you--and refusal to follow the request would have to be shown by continuing dependence. In other words, an independent response is dependent, but a dependent response is independent. The same argument can be made for the "Dominate me" request. A dominant response is submissive (the request is being followed) and a submissive response is dominant (the request is being defied).

Requests for noncompliant behavior may be considered formally paradoxical, but this does not make them powerful in ordinary relationships. Even such a clearly paradoxical injunction as "Disobey me" may have a nonproblematic meaning in social interaction. For example, if in the midst of an argument over the use of the family car, a mother tells her teen-aged daughter, "Go ahead, disobey me, take the car," the daughter probably knows her mother has reached a limit of exasperation and that to drive away will not count as an

act of obedience, but as an act of disobedience.

Hoffman's (1980, 1981) discussion of paradoxical directives underlines and amplifies Rabkin's argument. She, too, asserts that these injunctions signal a desire for systems change and that they can be negotiated successfully. When the systems change is disqualified, then a double bind has occurred. Hoffman goes beyond Rabkin, however, in suggesting that paradoxical injunctions are a necessary ingredient of systems change. While Rabkin proposes that these changes may derive from other sources, Hoffman sees the paradoxical injunction as a key element in the pressures she describes as the "sweat box" which precede change:

> . . . a prerequisite for creative leaps in complex systems is a period of of confusion accompanied by self-contradictory messages, inconsistencies, and above all, paradoxical injunctions: I command you to be independent; I want you to spontaneously love me; I order you to be the dominant one [1980, p. 64].

From a critical perspective, Hoffman's analysis suffers from the same formal problems outlined in many cases above. She draws a parallel between paradoxical communication and logical paradox, but does not explain the meaning of this connection. In her discussion, she does not refer to the meaning reversals of logical paradox as an explanation of why these injunctions are powerful, but significantly, she maintains the view that the injunctions <u>are</u> powerful. Their power has simply shifted from a necessary association with pathological communication to a potential for both good and

bad communication patterns. Essentially, then, Hoffman's analysis still implies an assumption of formal determinism.

# C H A P T E R  I I I

## AN ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF PARADOXICAL COMMUNICATION

In Chapter II, it is argued that three distinct communication forms are conceptualized as paradoxical in the literature and that only one of these is formally paradoxical. Further, a critique is presented of the implicit and explicit assumption that communication forms described as paradoxical determine human interaction through the operation of formal influence. The specification of distinct communication forms and the rejection of formal determinism in the paradoxical communication literature raises two questions: first, what is the nature of the communication forms previously described as paradoxical? and, second, what is the relationship between these communication forms and human interaction?

In this chapter these two questions are addressed through an alternative model of paradoxical communication based in Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory. Essentially, it is argued that the communication forms described as paradoxical in the literature may be conceptualized as cultural level metarules. These highly abstract rules represent a matrix of potential meanings which are variously negotiated in social interaction. This

chapter begins with a brief summary of CMM theory following which the conceptualization of "paradoxical" communication within this theory is developed. Finally, the three communication forms described as paradoxical in the literature are discussed in light of this alternative conceptual model.

## The CMM Model of Human Communication

The CMM model of human communication (Cronen et al., 1982; Cronen and Pearce, 1981; Pearce and Cronen, 1980) is based on the assumption that meaning is created and negotiated in a social context. This complex process is described within the model in terms of three basic constructs--hierarchical levels of meaning, rules, and logical force--each of which is specified through the use of algebraic expressions. Note that the description of the CMM model which follows is simplified; the specific concepts reviewed are those which are most relevant to the present analysis of "paradoxical" communication.

### Hierarchical levels of meaning

Social meaning is context dependent. An insult delivered to a friend in a friendly exchange is interpreted as kidding while the same insult addressed to a foe in a stand-off counts as an instigation to attack. Within the

CMM model, six different contextual levels of meaning are specified; any combination may be utilized in the interpretation of social interaction.

At the lowest level of meaning, content (Cn) refers to the basic data of communication before interpretation occurs. For example, words, gestures, or acts, in themselves, have no meaning. It is only within the context of higher levels of meaning that content may be interpreted. The speech act (Sp Act) level of meaning refers to the relational interpretation of content in social interaction. In one situation, a smile may count as a sexual invitation while in another as a hostile expression of superiority. The episodic (Ep) level of meaning represents the context of a temporally bounded exchange of acts that persons view as wholes. For example, in a typical greeting exchange, asking, "How are you?" counts as a salutation rather than an actual inquiry. This significance is generated by the type of episode in which the greeting takes place. During a hospital visit, the same question would be interpreted differently. The relationship (R) level of meaning refers to the set of mutual expectations social actors have about what will transpire between them and what this will mean. This context is a highly significant determinant of social meaning. A compliment to one's spouse is understood very differently from a compliment to one's boss. The life-script (L-S) level of meaning represents the individual's

self-concept and again is an important context for social meaning. The tears of an aloof, reserved woman, for example, mean something quite different from the tears of her labile, expressive sister. Finally, cultural patterns (CP) define a people's most fundamental assumptions about ways of knowing and acting.

According to CMM theory, the six levels of meaning defined above are hierarchically organized with each succeeding level representing a higher order of meaning. The relationship between levels is not, however, either static or unidirectional. A higher level is created through time and then serves to define the lower level. And while a higher level of meaning exerts more influence over the meaning of something at a lower level, it is also possible and necessary for changes at a lower level to influence the meaning of a higher level. Context refers to the power of a higher level of meaning to make sense of events at a lower level.

To illustrate the evolution of context within the CMM model consider a developing close relationship. At first particular episodes are highly significant in building mutual expectations about the relationship. Positive experiences, like having fun on a date, create shared feelings of enjoyment. As the number of pleasurable episodes increases, the relationship is defined as close. Early in the relationship, a negative episode like arguing

over what to do for the evening may be highly disruptive as the relationship definition is not yet consolidated. Later on when the couple's relationship is clearly close and positive, a single negative episode will have less influence over the relationship definition. In fact, the relationship will contextualize the negative episode which may be interpreted as transitory and insignificant. If negative episodes continue to occur, however, eventually the relationship will be redefined by the episodes; the lower meaning level will transform the higher one.

Within the CMM model, the relative influence of contextual levels is expressed algebraically as shown in Figure 2. Here the contextual relationship between two levels is defined in terms of the relative impact of change in each level. If 'a' is the context for 'b,' then a change in 'a' is more likely to result in a change in 'b' than a change in 'b' resulting in a change in 'a.' If 'b' is the context for 'a,' then a change in 'b' is more likely to result in a change in 'a' than the reverse. In addition to showing the relative influence of change in each of two contextual levels, Figure 2 presents a reflexive type of contextual relationship in which contextual forces are balanced such that it is equally likely for one level of meaning to be the context for the other as the reverse. Within the CMM model, this type of contextual reflexivity is understood as formally equivalent to paradox.

$$\frac{a}{b}\Big| \left[ [\Delta a \supset p\ \Delta b] > [\Delta b \supset p\ \Delta a] \right] \qquad \text{Model 1}$$

$$\frac{b}{a}\Big| \left[ [\Delta a \supset p\ \Delta b] < [\Delta b \supset p\ \Delta a] \right] \qquad \text{Model 2}$$

$$\square^{a}_{b} \left[ [\Delta a \supset p\Delta b] = [\Delta b \supset p\Delta a] \right] \qquad \text{Model 3}$$

Where: $\urcorner$ = read as "in the context of . . ." For example $\frac{a}{b}\Big|$ should be read "b in the context of a."

$\Delta$ = change

$\supset$ = read "if . . . than"

p = probability

$>$ = greater than

$<$ = less than

$=$ = equal to

$\square$ = reflexive loop

Figure 2. Algebraic expressions of the three kinds of relationships that can exist between two levels of meaning in a hierarchical system (from Cronen et al., 1982, Figure 2).

Rules

The CMM model proposes that patterns of human interaction may be described in terms of rules persons have for making sense of experience and for deciding how to act. Constitutive rules define how meaning is construed in the context of the hierarchical levels of meaning described above and regulative rules stipulate possible or necessary ways of behaving.

In Figure 3 the algebraic expression of a constitutive rule is presented. In the example provided the constitutive rule defines the meaning of Jeff's request: "Would you do the dishes?" Depending on the context, the request could mean many things. Here the situation is one in which Jeff and Susan are involved in a love relationship and they are having a fight. In this context, the antecedent message is Susan's turning on the T.V. and Jeff's request counts as an angry demand and as a refusal to end the argument. This constitutive rule may be distinguished from a regulative rule insofar as the focus is on the assignment of meaning, i.e., what does Jeff's request signify? and not on the determination of action, i.e., what should Jeff do now?

In Figure 4, the algebraic expression of a regulative rule is presented. Two terms are added to this expression as compared with constitutive rules. Deontic operators refer to how particular actions are implicated in transaction. In context an act may be considered

Primitive form of a constitutive rule:

$$cR = \frac{M_{k-n}}{A \supset [M_i \rightarrow M_j]}$$

where:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| cR | = | constitutive rule |
| A | = | antecedent message or condition |
| $M_i$ | = | meaning at some level of abstraction "i" such as content level of meaning |
| $M_j$ | = | meaning at another level of abstraction "j" such as command level or relational meaning |
| $M_{k-n}$ | = | meanings at higher levels of abstraction such as the episode of talk or the definition of a relationship |
| $\rightarrow$ | = | read "counts as" |
| ⌐ | = | read "in the context of . . ." |
| $\supset$ | = | read "if . . . then" |

Example:

Love Relationship

Episode of Fighting

Susan turns on T.V. $\supset$ [ Jeff: "Would you do the dishes?" $\rightarrow$ Angry demand and refusal to end argument ]

Figure 3. Constitutive rules (after Cronen et al., 1982, Figure 3).

Primitive form of a regulative rule:

$$rR = \frac{Actn_{j-n}}{[A \supset (Do\ (SpAct))_{i-n}] \supset C}$$

where:

A = antecedent message or condition

Do = deontic operator. The deontic operators are: obligatory, legitimate, prohibited, and undetermined

$Actn_{i-n}$ = a class term for action at any level of the meaning above speech acts

SpAct = speech acts

C = intended consquequents of speech acts

Example:

Love Relationship

Episode of Fighting

[Jeff makes an angry demand ⊃ (Oblig. express anger: "Go to hell!")] ⊃ Jeff doesn't win fight

Figure 4. Regulative rules (after Cronen et al., 1982, Figure 5).

obligatory, legitimate, prohibited or undetermined. The intended consequent refers to what outcome the person is seeking. In the example given, the regulative rules tells how Susan should act in order to bring about a particular outcome. In the context of a love relationship during a fight, if Jeff makes an angry demand, Susan is obliged to express anger in return ("Go to hell!") in order to keep Jeff from winning the fight.

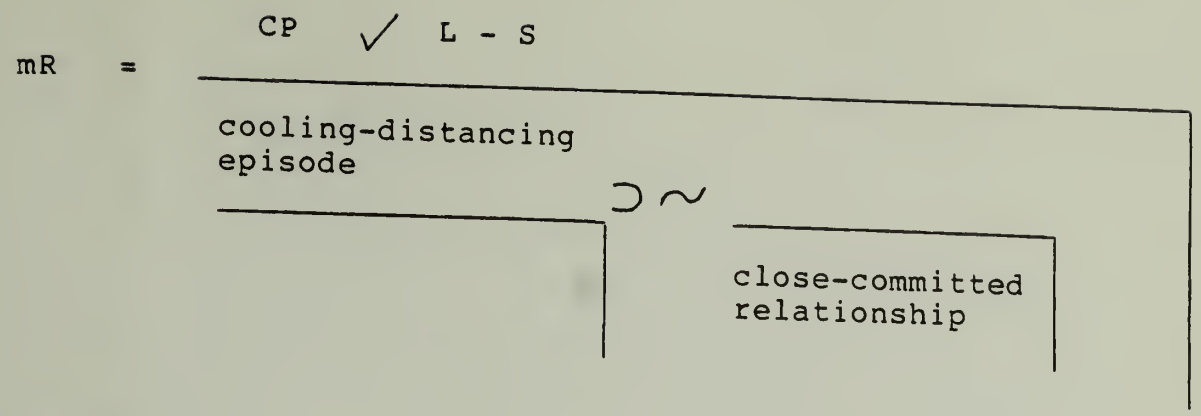
A third type of rule referred to by CMM theorists is the metarule defined as "a rule for the construction of other rules" (Cronen et al., 1982, p. 103). While this type of rule has not been formalized or elaborated within the CMM model, it may be used to specify certain necessary relationships among particular social meanings. In other words, there appear to be some contextual relationships among levels of meaning which either make sense or don't make sense in general. And these general meaning patterns are defined by metarules. The example of a metarule presented by Cronen et al. (1982) involves the dynamics of a developing relationship in which a "cooling-distancing" episode has occurred. The impossibility of a "cooling-distancing" episode being the context for a "committed-close" relationship is defined by a metarule which would apply to developing relationships in general. In this case, the metarule defines the impossibility of a particular episode being the context for a certain relationship. This

impossibility is defined within a larger context of cultural patterns and/or certain life meanings. The metarule may be expressed algebraically as in Figure 5. The use of metarules for describing cultural level relationships among social meanings will be applied below in the section on alternative conceptual models for "paradoxical" communication.

Logical force

Within the CMM model, the nature of the deontic operation connecting acts within regulative rules is further elaborated in the discussion of logical force. This concept refers to actors' rules defining the push and pull of their social actions. The experience of acting out of felt necessity vis-á-vis a particular level of meaning is referred to as prefigurative force. A person may feel obligated to act in a certain manner because: "That's how we've always done it" (cultural pattern); "Being married means I have to do it" (life-script); "The situation called for it" (episode); or "After what s/he said, I had to do it" (speech act). For example, a man who sees himself as nurturant may feel obligated to respond sympathetically to a friend's distress. This response may be defined as necessary both vis-á-vis the man's life-script and his relationship with the friend.

In contrast with prefigurative force, practical force refers to the degree to which a person acts in order to




where:

mR = metarule

✓ = read "and or"

~ = negation

Figure 5. Example of a metarule (after Cronen et al., 1982, p. 103).

achieve some end vis-á-vis a particular level of meaning, e.g., "To keep the tradition going" (cultural pattern) or "To end the conversation amicably" (episode). The sympathetic response in the example above may also be determined by the man's desire to establish or maintain a relationship definition which will accommodate his own future needs.

Both prefigurative and practical forces operate in the determination of social action. The balance of both types of force is referred to as relative necessity. When prefigurative force is high relative to practical force, the actor's experience is one of compulsion; when practical force is high relative to prefigurative force, the actor's experience is one of purposefulness.

## An Alternative Conceptual Model of Paradoxical Communication

The forms of communication described as paradoxical in the literature are best understood within the CMM system as cultural level metarules. To elaborate, these forms represent abstract rules for the construction of constitutive and regulative rules in ongoing interaction. They are based on shared cultural assumptions about the nature of fundamental social reality. The foremost example is formal paradox itself, a self-reflexive negative statement which generates meaning reversals. If we ask, why

do these meaning reversals occur, the answer must lie in culturally agreed upon rules for the assignment of meaning within an abstract system. At a very basic level, we agree upon definitions of truth, falsehood, and reflexive assertion such that the Epimenides paradox may be grasped by any adequately intelligent member of our culture. It was Russell and Whitehead's triumph to make explicit the implicit rules which create this curious, to us, entailment of contradiction in the liar paradox.

The meaning reversals entailed by the "Disobey me" paradox and related requests for noncompliant behavior are defined by cultural level metarules similar to those defining formal paradox. Contradictory double-level communication and the request for involuntary behavior are two communication forms which have been shown not to be formally paradoxical. While distinct from paradox, these forms are also constituted at a cultural level. With respect to contradictory double-level communication, we agree fundamentally upon the nature of contextual hierarchy. Given two contradictory messages, we agree that one shall influence the interpretation of the other and that ambiguity results from the lack of information about the relative influence of the two messages. With respect to involuntary behavior, we agree that compliant behavior must be voluntary and that, therefore, involuntary behavior cannot be a compliant response to a request.

Cultural level metarules define the communication forms described as paradoxical in the literature, but what is the relationship between these rules and actual human interaction? As we have seen, many theorists have assumed a deterministic relationship between form and interaction. Just as a rock thrown over a cliff must obey the law of gravity, these theorists have argued that people must obey the rules which define certain communication forms as contradictory or paradoxical and suffer the pathogenic or therapeutic consequences. Granted the inadequacy of this approach, how are we to understand the function of rules defining paradoxical communication when these rules are not necessarily followed in human interaction? The answer is that while these rules are clear when considered in an abstract conceptual context, they represent only potential and not necessary avenues for the interpretation of human action. As we shall see, the rules defining the meaning of contradictory double-level communication are commonly utilized in the construction of social meaning while it appears that the rules defining the request for involuntary behavior as impossible and the request for noncompliant behavior as paradoxical are less commonly invoked.

This conceptual model of communication described as paradoxical emphasizes the importance of context in understanding how these forms will be negotiated; i.e., the crucial factors in understanding "paradoxical" communication

lie in the episodic, relationship, and life-script levels of meaning. These separate contexts determine how "paradoxical" forms of communication are invoked. In the literature, the isolation and focus upon "paradoxical" injunctions in themselves has tended to obscure the importance of the underlying episodic, relationship, and life-script issues.

In the following sections, formal paradox and each of the communication forms described as paradoxical in the literature are reviewed. Each form is specified within the CMM model of algebraic expression and the inherent implications of these forms for social meaning are discussed. Some of the various ways these forms may be negotiated in human interaction are also suggested through reference to examples discussed in Chapter II and through the presentation of new examples.

## Formal paradox

As reviewed above, the CMM model defines formal paradox in terms of a reflexive relationship between two levels of meaning. This definition requires two additional features in order to describe formal paradox as presented in Chapter II: first, the reflexive relationship between levels must be self-reflexive, i.e., one message forms its own context; and second, the message must be negative. Utilizing the CMM notation system, a paradoxical form of reflexive loop may be

specified as shown in Figure 6. Here the negative message, "I am lying," reflexively forms its own context. It is a statement itself, yet at the same time a statement about itself. In cases where this formal relationship occurs, the attempt to assign meaning leads one through a vicious-circle of meaning reversals: "If I am lying, then I am telling the truth and if I am telling the truth, I am lying."

Contradictory double-level communication

Contradictory double-level communication represents a form in which contradictory messages are delivered at different levels of meaning. The rule for defining the resultant meaning of this type of communication is that one of the contradictory messages forms the context for the other, thus influencing the interpretation of that message. The CMM model presents contradictory double-level communication in terms of the hierarchical contextualization of communication. In fact, the power of context in determining meaning is often presented by CMM theorists with an example of contradictory double-level communication. One example they use is the street game, "Playing the Dozens," in which insults are interpreted in terms of gamesmanship rather than hostility.

While the CMM model provides implicit recognition of contradictory double-level communication, the potential of this form for meaning reversals is only emphasized with

$$\square^{P:M_i} \qquad \left[\begin{array}{l} M_{\sim i} \supset Mi \text{ and} \\ Mi \supset M_{\sim i} \end{array}\right]$$

where:

$\square^{P}$ = paradoxical reflexive loop

$\sim$ = negation

M = message

Example of a paradoxical reflexive loop:

$\square^{P}$: I am lying.

$$\left[\begin{array}{lll} \text{I am lying.} & \supset & \text{I am telling the truth.} \\ & & \text{and} \\ \text{I am telling the truth.} & \supset & \text{I am lying.} \end{array}\right]$$

Figure 6. Metarule for a paradoxical reflexive loop.

respect to the strange loop in which the contextual relationship between contradictory messages is unclear. The CMM definition of contextual relationship is one of relative influence of incremental change in different levels of meaning. If a change, for example, at the speech act level is more likely to change the meaning of the episodic level than the reverse, the CMM model defines the speech act level as the context for the episode. This model serves well for the description of the evolution of context through interaction, but does not explicitly distinguish the reversals which may occur in contradictory double-level communication.

An additional expression for the definition of contradictory double-level communication is presented in Figure 7. It is intended to supplement the CMM model of the three potential relationships between levels of meaning presented earlier in Figure 2. Here, the reversal of context between 'a' and 'b' represents an exclusive disjunction, i.e., mutually exclusive interpretations occur depending on which message is context for the other. In the example given, the contradictory messages are friendliness as expressed through smiles and a light tone and hostility as expressed through the message: "You're so stupid." When friendliness forms the context for the hostile message, the communication may be interpreted as kidding, but when the message is the context for the friendliness, the

$$mR = \frac{a}{b} \not\equiv \frac{b}{a}$$

where:

$\not\equiv$ = exclusive disjunction

a and b = contradictory messages delivered at two levels of abstraction

Example of application of metarule for contradictory double-level communication:

$$\left[\begin{array}{l}\text{Friendliness: Smiling and light tone} \\ \hline \text{Hostility: "You're so stupid."}\end{array} \rightarrow \text{Kidding}\right] \not\equiv \left[\begin{array}{l}\text{Hostility: "You're so stupid."} \\ \hline \text{Friendliness: Smiling and light tone}\end{array} \rightarrow \begin{array}{l}\text{Vicious} \\ \text{Attack}\end{array}\right]$$

Figure 7. Metarule for contradictory double-level communication.

communication may be interpreted as something completely different, i.e., as a vicious attack. This example illustrates the crucial nature of the contextual relationship between contradictory messages in the interpretation of communication.

As discussed in Chapter II, the contradictory double-level communication form may be negotiated in a variety of ways. The "paradoxes of abstraction" conceptualized by Bateson, Haley, and Fry refer to situations in which the contextual relationship between contradictory messages is clear, although subject to reversals. In the Figure 7 example, the establishment of the contextual hierarchy yields a stable meaning, but a reversal of the hierarchy may occur. This is similar to Bateson's (1972) example of a peace-making ceremony in the Andaman Islands in which ritual blows are exchanged. The danger exists that the blows will become context for the ceremony, a meaning reversal will occur, and that fighting will break out all over again.

The strange loop, of course, refers to contradictory double-level communication in which the contextual relationship between messages is perfectly balanced such that it is equally likely for one message to be the context as the reverse. Imagine the difficulty which might occur in the Figure 7 example if the hostile message were equally likely to be the context for the friendly smiles and tone as the reverse. The resulting ambiguity would entail confusion

about completely opposite interpretations of the communication and the proper response.

The double bind is a type of contradictory double-level communication in which the potential for meaning reversals is exploited to frustrate or reward the respondent. As discussed in Chapter II, this reversal is pragmatically and not formally determined. Using the Figure 7 example once more, a double bind would be created if the person delivering the communication refused to acknowledge any interpretation suggested by the respondent. If the respondent takes the message as kidding, i.e., accepts the friendly tone and smiling as a context for the hostile message, the speaker would disqualify this, possibly saying, "You're so stupid, you take everything as a joke." If, however, the respondent takes the message seriously, i.e., accepts the hostile message as context for the friendly tone and smiling, and defends him/herself, the speaker will also disqualify this interpretation, saying, for example, "You always take things too seriously. I was just joking." The respondent can never be correct and the potential pathogenic quality of the interaction is revealed.

The request for involuntary behavior

Within the CMM model, the request for involuntary behavior may be described in terms of a metarule for the disjunction between involuntary and compliant responses,

i.e., a compliant response does not count as an involuntary response and an involuntary response does not count as a compliant response (see Figure 8). In the example given, Susan's request, "Be more affectionate," is an injunction for a certain type of feeling from Jeff and a feeling represents an involuntary response. The metarule defines a compliant response with this request as purposeful and therefore not involuntary behavior. If Susan invokes this metarule, she may disqualify Jeff's saying, "I love you," as compliant and not involuntary, i.e., not coming from true feeling. Although it is difficult to imagine the possibility, if Jeff were somehow to convey that he was saying, "I love you," only out of feeling and without regard to Susan's request, she could disqualify this response for not being compliant, i.e., he has not followed her request.

As described in Chapter II, this rule is negotiated in a variety of ways in human interaction. Haley's discussion of hypnosis provides an example of a situation in which the subject is moved to respond in a particular way and simultaneously to deny that the response is voluntary. The relationship is defined as one in which the hypnotist is in charge of this very loss of volition. In therapy, as we have seen, the request for involuntary behavior has been used to facilitate emotional expressiveness in a manner similar to hypnosis. Such requests have also been exploited in the technique of symptom prescription, with the intention

$$mR = \frac{CP \checkmark L.S. \checkmark R}{Ep_i \;\big|\; A \rightarrow \left[[Cn_j \rightarrow SpAct_k] \neq [Cn_j \rightarrow SpAct_1]\right]}$$

where:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| $Ep_i$ | = | request episode |
| A | = | involuntary behavior request |
| $Cn_j$ | = | response following request |
| $SpAct_k$ | = | compliance |
| $SpAct_1$ | = | involuntary |
| CP | = | cultural patterns |
| L.S. | = | life-script |
| R | = | relationship |

Example of application of metarule for the request for involuntary behavior:

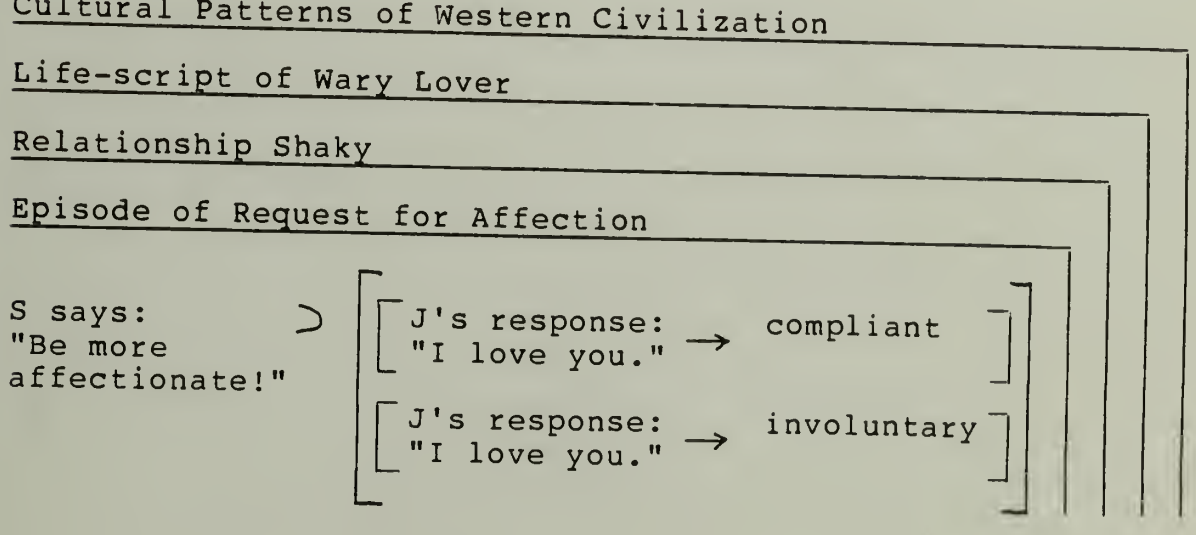



Figure 8. Metarule for the request for involuntary behavior.

of interrupting symptomatic behavior. Note that within the therapeutic relationship, this form of request is negotiated very differently.

In ordinary relationships, requests for involuntary behavior have been described as necessarily frustrating, but this need not be the case. If a man is requested by his wife, for example, to enjoy playing with his kids (Watzlawick et al., 1967), he may consciously remind himself that his children will be grown soon and that it is a pleasure to see them respond to his interest. If he then arranges to play touch football with his kids in the backyard, his voluntary thoughts and actions may result in a passively experienced sense of enjoyment. Now, when his wife looks out the window and sees her husband beaming while watching his youngster try for a pass, she can be pleased that her husband has complied with her request. Note that the wife evaluates her husband's behavior as simultaneously compliant--he is doing what she has asked--and involuntary--he is passively experiencing and manifesting a sense of enjoyment.

This does not mean that the formal nature of the request may not be exploited in a problematic fashion. In the example above, the wife may remain dissatisfied, telling herself that her husband is only playing with the kids because she asked him to and that he doesn't really enjoy it. Note that it is the way the husband and wife negotiate

this request that creates problems, not the formal nature of the request itself.

The request for noncompliant behavior

As mentioned above, the metarule for defining noncompliant behavior requests is similar to that defining formal paradox. In this case, it is the response to the request rather than the assignment of meaning to the paradoxical statement which is involved in vicious-circle meaning reversals (see Figure 9). Here the metarule defines the effort to comply with the noncompliant behavior request as a defiant response because the request is for noncompliance. However, the effort to defy the response is defined as compliant since, again, the request is for noncompliance. In the Figure 9 example, the noncompliant behavior request is the husband's demand that his wife "be independent." If she attempts to comply with this request by being independent, her husband may invoke the metarule for noncompliant behavior requests and disqualify her response for being compliant, she's showing her dependence by following his orders. If, on the other hand, she defies his demand and continues to be dependent, the invocation of the metarule would suggest she has complied with his request by being defiant. So, if the wife is independent, she's dependent and if she's dependent, she's independent.

The apparent implication of this communication form for

CP ✓ L-S ✓ R

$mR = Ep_i$

$A \supset [SpAct_j \supset SpAct_k \text{ and } SpAct_k \supset SpAct_j]$

where:

$Ep_i$ = request episode

A = request for noncompliant behavior

$SpAct_j$ = compliant response

$SpAct_k$ = noncompliant response

CP = cultural patterns

L-S = life-script

R = relationship

Example of application of metarule for noncompliant behavior requests:

Western Civilization (CP)

Dominant Husband (L-S)

Troubled Marriage (R)

Request for Independence (Ep)

Husband says: "Don't be so dependent on me. Go out and get a job." ⊃ [Compliance with request, getting a job ⊃ Defiance of request, wife still following orders and is dependent.] and [Defiance of request, wife refuses to get a job ⊃ Compliance with request, wife shows independence]

Figure 9. Metarule for noncompliant behavior requests.

interaction is that the participants would get dizzy in their attempts to negotiate the request. The formal logic of the request is like a revolving door in which there is no stopping and from which there is no exit. The respondent to the request enters the door and keeps moving, but being inside the building only implies a return to the outside of the building. It is an empirical question whether the paradoxical logic of the form is actually ever followed in real human interaction.

Another implication of the form (and one that seems more plausible for real human interaction) is that the requester either qualifies any response as defiant or compliant. The husband in the example provided in Figure 9 may reject his wife's efforts to comply with his request by getting a job. He may say, "You're just doing what I tell you to do. Why can't you be more independent?" On the other hand, her refusal to follow his request by not getting a job may also be rejected: "I told you to be more independent. Can't you go out and get a job?" This is the type of interaction which has typically been associated with noncompliant behavior requests in the literature.

The formal logic of the request for noncompliant behavior may also be exploited to qualify any response to the request as compliant. For example, a father may tell his son to be more independent by finding his own friends. If the son then takes the initiative in getting to know a

neighbor's child, the father may be pleased. If, on the other hand, the child does not look for his own friends, the father could also be pleased, remarking, "You've got a mind of your own and you're not going to run out and do just as I say."

In actual human interaction, of course, the paradoxical logic of the request for noncompliant behavior may be ignored altogether. As discussed in Chapter II, even such a clearly paradoxical injunction as "Disobey me" may be negotiated in complete disregard for the logic of the command. Further, a request for independent behavior may be treated in the same way as a request for ordinary compliant behavior like "Pass the salt." If the independent response is observed, the recipient of the request is considered compliant and if the independent response is not observed, the recipient of the request is considered defiant.

# CHAPTER IV

# AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF INVOLUNTARY BEHAVIOR REQUESTS AND NONCOMPLIANT BEHAVIOR REQUESTS

## Purpose of Study

It has been argued that a key focus in the understanding of communication described as paradoxical is that the vicious-circle reasoning that is associated with logical paradox drives actual social interaction in particular ways. An exploratory empirical study utilizing an interview strategy was carried out to investigate how, in fact, injunctions described as paradoxical are negotiated in ordinary social relationships. The decision was made to study involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests because both forms have been consistently described as paradoxical in the literature and as single-statement injunctions, they lend themselves to identification and description. Contradictory double-level communication was not investigated because it has not been consistently described as paradoxical in the literature and because it would appear to be much more difficult to specify in actual relationships.

Because most of the empirical data on involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests are

either anecdotal or clinical in nature, one of the major goals of this study was descriptive. How, when and with whom do individuals make such requests? How are these requests interpreted by the participants in the interaction and how do individuals respond to these requests? How is the response following the request interpreted and how does this contribute to the satisfying or unsatisfying negotiation of the exchange?

A more particular exploratory objective of the present study was to investigate whether the formal differences in involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests are associated with differences in interaction. On the one hand, the literature has emphasized the pernicious effects of paradox itself in ordinary social transactions and one might expect the formally paradoxical noncompliant behavior request to be more problematic than the formally absurd involuntary behavior request. On the other hand, the two request types are similar in that it is the effort to fulfill the request which is interpreted as evidence that the request has not been met. In the request for involuntary behavior request, an attempt to comply with the request is considered voluntary and so the request for <u>involuntary</u> behavior is unfulfilled. In the request for noncompliant behavior, a compliant response is considered noncompliant and vice versa. Because the form of both request types hinges on a similar disqualification of the

effort to comply with the request, one might expect closely related issues arising in transactions involving these requests. Due to the lack of any particular expectation with regard to differences in the negotiation of involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests, no specific research questions on this topic were formulated.

In addition to the need for basic descriptive information on involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests, the conceptual arguments proposed above regarding the negotiation of these requests in ordinary social interactions suggested two specific research questions for investigation. In the literature on paradoxical communication, both involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests have been conceptualized as necessarily generating interpersonal difficulties based on the formal characteristics of the requests.. It has been argued here that this assumption of formal determinism is inconsistent with the context dependent nature of human communication and that satisfying outcomes of involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests may be negotiated in social interaction. Thus, one research question for this study was existential in nature, i.e., do satisfying outcomes to involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests exist?

A more specific hypothesis for the present study was also supported by the conceptual analysis provided above.

This relates to the problem of how a compliant response to an involuntary behavior request or a noncompliant behavior request is perceived. In prior conceptualizations of communication described as paradoxical, a compliant response to an involuntary behavior request or a noncompliant behavior request has been considered necessarily unsuccessful as a fulfillment of the request. It has been argued here that the interpretation of compliance in the response to an involuntary behavior request or a noncompliant behavior request may be the basis for dissatisfaction with the response for not being involuntary or not being compliant. On the other hand, the simultaneous evaluation of the response to an involuntary behavior request or a noncompliant behavior request as both compliant and involuntary or both compliant and noncompliant according to the terms of the request may be the basis for satisfaction with the response as a successful fulfillment of the request. This line of reasoning supported the following hypothesis, given here separately for involuntary and noncompliant behavior for the sake of clarity:

> When the response to a request for involuntary behavior is seen as compliant, then satisfaction with the response is related to whether the response is also seen as involuntary.
>
> When the response to a request for noncompliant behavior is seen as compliant, then satisfaction

with the response is related to whether the response is also seen as noncompliant.

Note that this hypothesis only addresses responses to involuntary behavior requests or noncompliant behavior requests which are seen as compliant.

## Design

Essentially the study involved asking subjects to describe experiences surrounding involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests in their close relationships. The interview outline was guided by the CMM model of human communication presented earlier. This model was chosen because it has been used successfully in the investigation of complex social episodes including weeping (Cornelius, 1981), undesired repetitive patterns (Cronen, Pearce, and Snavely, 1979), and, most notably, paradoxical communication (Harris, 1980; Harris, Cronen, and McNamee, Note 3). These studies all utilized structured interviews with subjects on the social interactions being studied and the same basic approach was used in the present study. The results of a pilot study showed that subjects can recollect experiences with involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests and that they can meaningfully describe these experiences.

In the study, subjects were asked to describe an

involuntary behavior request or a noncompliant behavior request which they had delivered rather than received. This decision was made to simplify the study and because one basic research question was whether people can be satisfied with the response following an involuntary behavior request or a noncompliant behavior request. It was felt that this question would be most appropriately evaluated based on the requester's interpretation of the response rather than the respondent's.

At the outset of the interview subjects were asked to identify either an involuntary behavior request or a noncompliant behavior request which they had made in the context of a close relationship. They were asked to describe the relationship in which the request occurred and to outline the frequency and timing of their request and responses following the request. When subjects recalled making the request more than once, they described the request episode which was most clear for them. When they recalled more than one response following the request, they described two response episodes--one which was less or least satisfying and one which was more or most satisfying. This allowed for the exploration of the determinants of the successful and unsuccessful negotiation of such requests.

Descriptive data on subjects' experiences with involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests were sought through a variety of open-ended and

quantitative measures derived primarily from the CMM model. The research questions posed above were addressed through more specific measures designed to assess satisfaction with the response following the request, the compliant nature of the response, and the involuntary or noncompliant nature of the response.

## Subjects

For two basic reasons, only female subjects were used in the study. First, anecdotal and pilot study data suggested that women may be more capable of reporting on experiences with involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests. Since this was an exploratory investigation, it was reasonable to use the subjects who are the best informants, in this case, women. Second, the hypotheses of the present study focussed on the formal aspects of involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests. Sex differences in the delivery of the requests and their negotiation from the requester's point of view were not of interest. The descriptive objectives and the evaluation of the research questions were adequately explored with female subjects only.

Subjects were University of Massachusetts undergraduates enrolled in psychology courses. They

received a small amount of experimental credit towards psychology class grades for their participation in the study. Recruitment information delivered both in psychology courses and through a posted sign-up sheet was as follows:

> Female subjects are being sought for a study of two particular kinds of requests made in the context of a close relationship (e.g., with a boyfriend, husband, mother, father, brother, sister, friend, or child). If you can clearly recall making either one of the requests described below in the context of a close relationship, you are eligible for participation in this study. The study will involve a detailed interview about your experience with the request which will last about one-and-a-half hours. You will receive two experimental credits for your participation.
>
> Request I: This type of request is for behavior which is experienced passively, that is, behavior which cannot be produced on purpose like emotions, desires, and spontaneity. Examples of these requests are:
>
> 1. You should enjoy studying.
> 2. I want you to want to spend time with me.
> 3. Bring me flowers spontaneously.
>
> Request II: This type of request is for behavior

which is noncompliant, that is, behavior which is independent, dominant, or disobedient. Examples of these requests are:

1. You should be more independent.
2. I want you to dominate me.
3. Don't do what I tell you to, decide for yourself.

Note that the request for a spontaneous gift of flowers was dropped from the list of involuntary behavior requests midway through the study when it was determined that this request usually represents a noncompliant behavior request.

Fifty-seven subjects attended study sessions; forty interviews were completed and judged appropriate for the study. Twenty subjects reported on involuntary behavior requests and twenty subjects reported on noncompliant behavior requests.

## Materials and Procedures

### Elicitation

Following the review and signing of an informed consent form, subjects were reminded of the types of requests under investigation. Discussion then followed to identify an appropriate request which the subject had delivered in the context of a close relationship. In order to be acceptable, the subject's recollection of both a request episode and a response episode needed to be clear.

Descriptive measures

Descriptions of transactions surrounding the requests were developed on the basis of the CMM model. Specifically, information was sought regarding: (1) the duration and frequency of the request and responses following the request; (2) content and speech act meanings; (3) the episodic variables of valence, coherence, and control; and (4) life-script and relationship meanings especially in the context of reflexive needs and reflexive effects. These variables are explained below and the particular questions used to address them are presented. Note that each interview item was presented orally to the subject; when scale ratings were made, subjects viewed a copy of the scale and reported their rating verbally.

In addition to the quantitative items administered, subjects were asked to describe in their own words how they understood their interactions with the respondent to their request. Two questions were explored after the subject outlined the request episode or the response episode, but before any specific questions concerning the episode were asked: (1) How did you understand what was happening in this episode? (2) How did [the respondent] understand what was happening in this episode? Furthermore, the subject was asked to briefly explain her quantitative ratings both to insure the subject's understanding of the item and to help explore the subject's perceptions of the questions raised by

these items.

A copy of the interview schedule containing all the items and scales administered is located in Appendix A. In order to facilitate the recollection of material by the subject, the order of questioning was somewhat different from the order in which the items are discussed below.

Duration and frequency of the request and responses following the request. Although the focus of the study was on the negotiation of a specific request, pilot and anecdotal data suggested that involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests are often repeated over time. As background information on the history of the requests in the relationship, it was important to explore the length of time during which the request was in effect and the frequency with which the request was made.

In addition to the duration and frequency of the request, the duration and frequency of responses following the request were assessed. Note that in the assessment of the duration and frequency of responses, the subject was asked first to describe occurrences of the respondent's behavior which were relevant to the request, but were not necessarily efforts to fulfill the request. For example, if the subject asked that the respondent be more independent, she was asked how many times the respondent "showed you that s/he was independent?" After gathering information on responses in this way, subjects were asked if these

responses occurred because of their request. Then subjects were asked if the respondent made any other "specific efforts to fulfill your request." The goal here was to identify all the behaviors following the request which were relevant to the request and not merely those responses which were considered compliant efforts to respond to the request.

Content and speech act meanings. The description of response and request episodes was developed in terms of the sequence of acts performed. Subjects were encouraged to describe as clearly as possible exactly what was said and done by both participants in the episode. After the delineation of acts, i.e., the episodic content, was determined, subjects were asked how they understood the episode and how they felt the respondent understood the episode. Then the episodes were reviewed again, this time with the goal of having the subject provide a speech act label for each act which would describe what each participant was attempting to do. The examples of speech act labels used to facilitate this process were: insult, plea for help, and information seeking.

Episodic variables of valence, coherence, and control. These terms are used in the CMM model to describe respectively the participants' valuation of the episode, the degree of mutual understanding in an episode and the distribution of power in the episode. Given that requests for involuntary behavior and requests for noncompliant

behavior have been portrayed as negative, confusing, and powerful in the literature, it was useful to obtain information on these three dimensions in the present study.

With respect to the valence of the episode, pilot research suggested that at times involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior request may lead to the discussion and resolution of a relationship issue. When this happens, the valence of the episode changes over its duration. Since this was useful descriptive information to obtain, subjects were asked to make a valence rating of request episodes up to and including the request and at the end of the episode. Valence was considered in terms of the subjective emotional experience during the episode; at the end of the episode, subjects were asked to rate the valence of the episode in terms of their immediate subjective emotional experience and in terms of the valence of the episode vis-á-vis its long-term consequences for the relationship with the other person. Valence in the response episodes was rated for the episode as a whole and in terms of the long-term consequences for the relationship. Ratings of episode valence were performed on a 9 point scale (1--very negative, 9--very positive).

The level of coherence in the episode from the subject's perspective was assessed through use of the question: "How clearly did you and the other person understand each other in this episode?" Ratings were made

on a 9 point scale (1--we understood each other very well, 9--we understood each other very poorly). Control in the episodes was explored through use of the question: "Who had more control over what happened in this episode?" Three possible choices were provided for the subject's evaluation: I had more control; the other person had more control; neither I nor the other person had more control.

Life-script and relationship levels of meaning. Basic demographic information regarding the life-script level of meaning, i.e., age, sex and grade level or occupation, was obtained for both subject and respondent. Background information on the relationship within which the subject described the request was obtained in terms of the nature and duration of the relationship as well as changes which had occurred in the relationship.

Two other CMM variables, reflexive needs and reflexive effects, were assessed to help explore the life-script and relationship levels of meaning. Reflexive need refers to the necessity experienced by an individual to receive a certain response from another individual in order to maintain a desired contextual definition. For example, if two professors are having a spirited discussion of social science methodology, one may need to hear his or her position acknowledged in order to maintain a definition of the episodic context as a "spirited discussion" and not a "futile argument." Reflexive effect refers to the actual

change in contextual definition which occurs following the other's response. In the example above, if the second professor does not offer acknowledgement of the first professor's position, the reflexive effect is a change in the meaning of the episodic context for the first professor from "spirited discussion" to "futile argument."

In this study, reflexive needs and reflexive effects were assessed in terms of the life-script and relationship levels of meaning. Following their descriptions and ratings of request episodes, subjects were asked first to explain what response to the request was desired. This meaning was then used to assess the reflexive need for this outcome in terms of the life-script ("How would the desired response to your request have affected your thoughts and feelings about yourself?") and the relationship ("How would the desired response to your request have affected your relationship with the other person?"). Immediately following each of these questions, a rating of reflexive need strength was obtained for the life-script level of meaning ("How much did you need the desired response to your request in order to achieve these thoughts and feelings about yourself?") and the relationship level of meaning ("How much did you need the desired response to your request in order to achieve this effect in your relationship with the other person?"). Ratings of reflexive need strength were made on a 9 point scale (1--I needed it very little, 9--I needed it very

much). One additional item intended to increase the understanding of the relationship level of meaning was administered after the reflexive need questions: "At the time of this episode, what changes, if any, did you desire in your relationship with the other person?"

Reflexive effects were explored with respect to response episodes. Following the description of the response episode in terms of content and episodic variables, subjects were asked to explain the fact of the other person's response in terms of the life-script level of meaning ("How did the response following your request affect your thoughts and feelings about yourself?") and the relationship level of meaning ("How did the response following your request affect your relationship with the other person?").

Research questions.

As outlined above, there were two specific research questions for this study. The first involved the existence of satisfying outcomes to involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests. To evaluate this question, for each response episode described, the subject was asked, "How satisfied did you feel with the other person's response in this episode?" Ratings were performed on a 9 point scale (1--completely satisfied, 9--completely dissatisfied).

The second research question was expressed in terms of

a conditional hypothesis:

> When the response to a request for involuntary behavior is seen as compliant, then satisfaction with the response is related to whether the response is also seen as involuntary.
>
> When the response to a request for noncompliant behavior is seen as compliant, then satisfaction with the response is related to whether the response is also seen as noncompliant.

In order to evaluate this hypothesis, an assessment was needed of three dimensions--whether the response was perceived as an effort to comply with the request, how satisfied the subject was with the response and the degree to which the response was perceived as involuntary or noncompliant according to the nature of the request. The satisfaction item has just been described. The degree to which the response was seen as compliant was assessed through asking how strongly the subject agreed or disagreed with the statement": "The other person acted as s/he did because I asked him/her to do it." Assessment of the degree to which the subject saw the response as involuntary or noncompliant was made through asking how strongly the subject agreed or disagreed with the statement: "The other person acted as s/he did because s/he . . . (the involuntary or noncompliant aspect of the requested behavior was inserted here, e.g., if the request was for spontaneity, '. . . because s/he was being spontaneous' or if the request was for independence, '. . . because s/he was being independent')." Ratings for both compliance and the involuntary or noncompliant nature

of the response were made on a 9 point scale (1--strongly agree, 9--strongly disagree).

# C H A P T E R V

# RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## Overview

In this chapter the study results are presented and discussed in three sections. First, a basic introduction to the data is provided through discussion of the elicitation process, the content categories of the requests, identifying demographic and relationship information for the subjects, and the duration and frequency of the requests and responses following the request. This introductory section is intended to orient the reader to the data as well as to provide basic descriptive information on involuntary behavior request and noncompliant behavior requests.

In the second section, the research questions are reviewed via reference to the quantitative data. Comparisons between the involuntary behavior request group and the noncompliant behavior request group are presented; the question of whether satisfactory outcomes can be associated with these request types is discussed; and the correlation between satisfaction with a response following a request and the perception of the involuntary or noncompliant nature of the response is discussed for cases in which the subject felt the response occurred because of the request.

The third section represents a conceptual effort to understand the inherent significance of involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests and the determinants of successful and unsuccessful interactions surrounding such requests. It is argued that the metarules defining the contradictory or paradoxical nature of the requests underline the issues of closeness and control in human relationships. Further, it is proposed that the essential determinants of how an involuntary behavior request or a noncompliant behavior request is negotiated lie in these issues of control and closeness. In the third section the data are used in a qualitative fashion to illustrate the argument presented.

## Introduction to the Data

### Elicitation

Three aspects of the elicitation process are discussed in this section: (1) the reasons for interview failures; (2) subjects' differential responses to elicitation for involuntary behavior requests and elicitation for noncompliant behavior requests; and (3) subjects' spontaneous comments on problems with the type of request under investigation.

Interview failures. Of the 57 subjects who attended sessions, 40 interviews (70.2%) were completed and judged

appropriate for analysis. There are several reasons for the remaining 17 interview failures (29.8%). In six cases, subjects were unable to recall making either an involuntary behavior request or a noncompliant behavior request, i.e., "elicitation failure" occurred. In the remainder of cases one or more of the following factors played a role in the interview failure. Some subjects recalled appropriate requests, but not in sufficient detail for the study. In some cases an investigator error occurred--either an appropriate request was mistakenly rejected from consideration or elicitation instructions for a noncompliant behavior request were not administered. The latter error occurred because at a certain stage in the study, a sufficient number of interviews on noncompliant behavior requests had been collected. At this point several subjects reported noncompliant behavior requests but these were not pursued because sufficient data on this request type had been gathered. Finally, two subjects were interviewed about requests which are later decided to be inappropriate for the study.

Discussion. The most significant aspect of the interview failures is that only 6 out of 57 subjects (10.5%) were definitely unable to give an example of either an involuntary behavior request or a noncompliant behavior request. This may have been due to a self-selection process. It will be recalled that the recruitment

information listed several examples of the requests under investigation and it may be that potential subjects who did not identify with these examples may have decided not to participate. On the other hand, the relatively low failure rate in this normal sample suggests that these types of requests may be more common than previously thought.

Elicitation differences. During the first 29 interviews when elicitation instructions were given for both involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests, subjects were much more likely to give an example of a noncompliant behavior request. Seventeen subjects (58.6%) reported noncompliant behavior requests, 7 subjects (24.1%) reported involuntary behavior requests, and 5 subjects (17.2)% were interview failures. Because of this imbalance, the second 28 interviews began with elicitation instructions for involuntary behavior requests only. With this procedural shift, the elicitation failure rate was roughly equalized for involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests. Eleven out of 28 (39.3%) elicitations for involuntary behavior requests failed and 6 out of 13 (46.2%) elicitations for noncompliant behavior requests failed.

Discussion. The greater number of noncompliant behavior requests reported during the first 29 interviews may be due to two factors: (1) the elicitation instructions for noncompliant behavior request were delivered second so a

recency effect may have resulted; (2) two request types, "Be independent," and, "Do something spontaneously," were classified as noncompliant behavior requests and these requests seemed more familiar to subjects than involuntary behavior requests such as, "You should enjoy doing something," or, "I want you to want to do something." The observation of an equalization in elicitation failure rates for involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests over the second 28 interviews, however, suggests that when subjects were actively encouraged to recall involuntary behavior requests, this was no more unlikely than the recall of noncompliant behavior requests. The net impression gained is that certain noncompliant behavior requests were relatively more salient in subjects' experiences than involuntary behavior requests, but that with increased facilitation, real elicitation differences between the two request types were negligible.

Subjects' spontaneous reservations. During the elicitation process, spontaneous comments were made by seven subjects (12.3%) which referred to the potentially problematic nature of the requests presented. One subject was particularly self-conscious about her decision not to make involuntary behavior request or noncompliant behavior requests: "All those things run through my mind, but I never asked it, because if you asked them, it wouldn't be spontaneous." Another subject recognized the requests as

paradoxical based on material from one of her courses and she asserted, "It kind of loses its value when you have to ask for something you want." These comments and those made by the other five subjects are presented in Table 1.

Discussion. The spontaneous comments of a number of subjects on the potentially problematic nature of involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests suggests that for certain individuals the issues raised by these request are highly salient. These issues will be further discussed in the third section of this chapter. At present it is interesting to note that it was the exception rather than the rule for subjects to articulate doubts about the desirability of making the type of request under investigation.

## Content categories

For descriptive purposes, the involuntary behavior request group and the noncompliant behavior request group were divided into six basic groups based on the content of the request. Due to the range of requests described, these subgroups vary in homogeneity, but they still enable a useful characterization of the data.

Involuntary behavior request content categories. In the first subgroup (N=5) of the involuntary behavior request group, subjects reported requests in which the desired response from the other was more concern for the subjects'

Table 1

Spontaneous Comments on the Problematic Nature of Involuntary Behavior Requests and Noncompliant Behavior Requests

"All those things run through my mind, but I never asked it, because if you asked for them, it wouldn't be spontaneous."

"Like, say within a relationship, if you want the other person to give you something spontaneously, wouldn't you just wait for the other person to do it?"

"Yes, I wish he'd do it without my having to ask. Hugs and emotions shouldn't have to be told."

Subject referred to potential response to "Be spontaneous" injunction as "not exactly spontaneous any longer."

"You can't ask for something spontaneous."

"It kind of loses its value when you have to ask for something you want."

"It's kind of hard to tell someone they should want to spend time with you. They should get it on their own instead of having somebody tell them."

feelings. These subjects appeared to be looking for a more nurturant, empathic, or supportive response from the respondent. Three subjects in this subgroup described request episodes in which they were upset by their boy friends' immediate behavior. For example, one subject reported a situation in which she was unhappy and tearful about problems with her parents. When her boy friend appeared to her to be less than supportive, she angrily confronted him: "Why don't you hug me? You don't even want to hug me!" Of the remaining two subjects in this subgroup, one described asking her father to be more patient when he was teaching her about something.

Since patience might be defined in terms of specific actions, e.g., going more slowly, to request more patience need not necessarily represent a request for a change in feeling. In this subject's case, however, it was clear from her statements that she wanted her father to feel differently when he was instructing her--she wanted him to be more sensitive and concerned about where she was at with the material under consideration. The last subject in this subgroup talked about asking a male friend for more enthusiasm and support for her activities.

The second subgroup (N=5) of the involuntary behavior request group involved requests for basic shifts in the respondents' feelings. In all of these cases, the request was repeated on several occasions over an extended period of

time and four subjects reported making the request over a number of years. The desired response in this subgroup seemed to be a change in the respondent's personality. Examples include one subject's effort to get her boy friend to be more caring for others and another subject's insistence that her boy friend should enjoy his studies. The latter example, of course, is a classic in the field due to its treatment in Change (Watzlawick, Weakland, and Fisch, 1974).

In the third subgroup (N=4) of the involuntary behavior request group, the desired response from the respondent was for a stronger feeling for the subject. In one case a subject reported directly telling a male friend with whom she desired a more romantic relationship, "I think you should feel more towards me than you do," and another subject described telling her gay lover, "I want you to want me as much (and) in the same way (as) I want you." The other two cases involved more indirect requests for closeness with the subject. One subject asked a man with whom she desired more closeness to relax with her and not to worry about hurting her; the other subject told her boy friend, "I want you to want to stop seeing your other girl friend."

The remaining three subgroups of the involuntary behavior request group contain two subjects each. In the first the request was for the desire to show affection--for

example, one subject told her boy friend, "I want you to want to show me how you feel towards me through actions." In the second, the request was for enjoyment of a shared activity with the subject--one subject asked her brother to enjoy playing basketball with her and the other subject asked her boy friend to enjoy talking with her as much as he would with his friends. The last subgroup includes two miscellaneous items: one subject's request to a male friend who wanted a romantic relationship not to feel as he did, the classic, "Why can't you love me as a friend and not as a girl friend?" and another subject's request to her boy friend not to worry about her commitment to him.

Discussion. The involuntary behavior requests described by subjects included several that would be widely recognized as "paradoxical," in particular the injunction to enjoy studying mentioned above, but also those request in which the emphasis was on wanting the respondent "to want" to do something. However, the formal definition of the request type in terms of any request for nonpurposeful behavior did expand the variety of reports offered by subjects. The key to understanding the sample requests as requests for involuntary behavior is simply to ask whether one could purposefully perform the behavior requested. In every case, the request was at least in part for an emotional shift and emotions as Averill (1980a) has pointed out are experienced passively.

Noncompliant behavior request content categories. The first subgroup (N=5) of the noncompliant behavior request group consists of requests for independence from the subject. Subjects in this subgroup described asking the respondent to be more independent in relation to the subject--for example, one subject told her boy friend, "Don't revolve your life around me. Just live your own life and don't have it so hung up on me."

In the second subgroup (N=3) of the noncompliant behavior request group, subjects reported on requests closely related to those in the first subgroup. They described telling the respondent to be more independent of other people. One of these subjects advised her sister to be more independent, especially with respect to the sister's husband: "You have to stick up for yourself and decide what you want in life."

In the third subgroup (N=4) of the noncompliant behavior request group, subjects reported requests for self-initiative in the respondent, i.e., subjects were asking the respondent to do something on their own or without being asked. In two cases, the requested behavior was specific. For example, one subject reported a long discussion with her boy friend about whether he would spend all of his spring vacation with her or only part of it. Although she very much wanted his company throughout the vacation, she was loathe to make demands and so explained: "I want you to do

what I want you to do. If you're deciding to do it just because I want you to do it, I'd rather not do it al all." In two other cases, subjects asked for non-specific behaviors to be performed on the initiative of the respondent. One subject told her boy friend, "I wish you would think about doing little things for me without me having to give you a hint or having to come right out an tell you."

The fourth subgroup (N=6) of noncompliant behavior requests involved requests for a surprise. Four subjects reported requests for specific surprises including flowers, a Christmas gift, and even a surprise birthday party. Two subjects in this subgroup described request for nonspecific surprises, for example, one subject described an episode in which she simply told her boy friend, "Bring me a surprise."

The fifth and sixth noncompliant behavior request subgroups each contained one subject only. In the fifth subgroup, the request was for dominance with respect to studying. The subject told her sister: "Make me study. I have to get this done and I don't feel like it." In the sixth subgroup, the subject described getting into fights with her boy friend in which she would demand that he defy her: "Yell at me. Tell me to go to hell and fight with me. Don't just sit there like a spineless jellyfish. Fight with me."

Discussion. As in the involuntary behavior request

group, a number of the requests described by subjects in the noncompliant behavior request group represented injunctions commonly referred to as paradoxical in the literature. These include the request for independence from the subject, the request for a surprise, and the request for defiance. In each of these subgroups, a compliant response to the request may be readily seen to stand in contradiction to the desired response.

While the requests noted above represent clear examples of noncompliant behavior requests, the inclusion of the remaining subgroups requires clarification of the formal issues involved. First, how is the request for independence in relation to others an example of a noncompliant behavior request? This classification is based on the meaning of the response vis-á-vis the request and the requester. If a person is told to be independent of others, his/her attempt to comply with the request counts in a formal sense as dependent behavior with respect to the requester. The respondent is now doing what s/he has been told to do and so is dependent in relation to the requester. In order to be independent of the requester, the person must refuse to act independently with others thereby defying the request. So, in relation to the requester, independent behavior counts as dependent behavior and dependent behavior counts as independent behavior.

With respect to the third subgroup of the noncompliant

behavior request group, i.e., the request for self-initiative in the respondent, an issue needing clarification is why these requests should not be considered involuntary behavior requests. For example, the subject who wanted her boy friend to decide on his own to spend all of his spring vacation with her was indicating indirectly that she wanted him "to want" to do it. In the other cases of the request for self-initiated actions, a similar dynamic may be implied. In all three cases, the assignment of the request to the noncompliant behavior request group was made on the basis of the subject's emphasis on requesting that the respondent act independently of the request. The desire for a change in the respondent's feelings was conveyed by implication only.

The inclusion of the injunction, "Make me study," as a noncompliant behavior request also deserves formal clarification. This injunction may be considered a request for domination with respect to a specific behavior. The subject asked to be forced to do something she would rather not do--she requested a dominant response from the respondent. A dominant response, however, by definition cannot be a compliant response and when a dominant response is requested,a formal paradox emerges. In this case, if the respondent complies with the injunction by telling the requester to study, the respondent has not been dominant, but submissive vis-á-vis the request. The respondent is not

dominating the requester, but only following directions. If the respondent is submissive by not telling the requester to study, then the respondent has defied the request and is acting in a dominant fashion towards the requester. A compliant response counts as noncompliance with the request and vice versa.

Before leaving the consideration of the request types presented here, a general qualifying statement is in order. Throughout the discussion of the content subgroups, the formal classification of the requests has been a primary consideration. The use of a formal definition rather than specific examples in selecting requests appropriate for the study resulted in the inclusion of several request types not previously reviewed in the literature. In some cases, the application of the formal definition may have appeared forced. This process, however, is justified on the basis of the emphasis on form in the paradoxical communication literature. Explanations of the significance of paradoxical injunctions have always focused on the formal features of the message, so a study of such requests must be based on their formal definition.

## Demographic and relationship data

Identifying information. As specified in Chapter IV, all subjects were undergraduate women. The mean age for subjects reporting on involuntary behavior requests was 20.9

years. The respondents to these requests represented a group of 18 men and 2 women; their average age was 24.6 years. The mean age for subjects reporting on noncompliant behavior requests was 19.8 years. The respondents to these requests represented a group of 14 men and 6 women; their average age was 23.8 years.

Discussion. For both involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests, the respondents to the subjects' requests were on the average older than the subjects and were more likely to be men than women. This may be attributed, in part, to the fact that in the involuntary behavior request group 12 respondents and in the noncompliant behavior request group, 13 respondents were boy friends at the time of the request. The age difference may be associated with this relationship difference--boy friends in our society being customarily the same age or older than their partners. Further, two of the noncompliant behavior requests and one of the involuntary behavior requests were addressed to the subjects' parents--the large age difference here also contributed to some extent to the greater average age of respondents compared with subjects.

Relationship type. As mentioned above, for both request groups, the majority of requests were made to persons with whom the subject had a romantic or dating relationship. In the involuntary behavior request group, nine subjects described requests to men with whom they had

an ongoing romantic relationship; three subjects described requests to men with whom the romantic relationship had terminated; and one subject described a request to a woman with whom a romantic relationship had terminated. In the noncompliant behavior request group, eight subjects described requests to men with whom they had an ongoing romantic relationship and five subjects described requests to men with whom the romantic relationship had terminated.

Involuntary behavior requests were next most frequently described as addressed within a friendship--three requests to male friends and one request to a female friend were reported. Two subjects described noncompliant behavior requests addressed to female friends while no subjects reported on such a request addressed to male friend.

The remainder of subjects described requests addressed to family members. Two subjects reported on involuntary behavior requests made to brothers and one subject described such a request made to her father. Two subjects reported on noncompliant behavior requests made to sisters, one subject described such a request made to her brother, and two subjects reported on such requests addressed to their mothers. For a summary of the types of relationships within which subjects described requests, see Tables 2 and 3.

Discussion. There are at least two possible explanations for the observed preponderance of requests described within the context of romantic relationships. The

Table 2

Relationship Type:

Involuntary Behavior Requests

| Relationship Type | Male Respondent | Female Respondent | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Romantic: ongoing | 9 | - | 9 |
| Romantic: terminated | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| Friendship | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| Sibling | 2 | - | 2 |
| Parent | 1 | - | 1 |

Table 3

Relationship Type:

Noncompliant Behavior Requests

| Relationship Type | Male Respondent | Female Respondent | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Romantic: ongoing | 8 | - | 8 |
| Romantic: terminated | 5 | - | 5 |
| Friendship | - | 2 | 2 |
| Sibling | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Parent | - | 2 | 2 |

first is that some of the elicitation examples biased reports in this direction, for example, "I want you to want to spend time with me," or, "Bring me flowers spontaneously." A second explanation is that involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests were more salient and more frequent within the subjects' romantic relationships. This, in turn, could be due to romantic relationships being characterized by the active and continuing negotiation of psychological needs. Expectations may be more intense leading to the explicit venture of a request whereas a similar issue with a relative may be ignored due to resignation with the status quo and a friend may be dropped if problems and dissatisfactions grow beyond a certain point. The question of the relational meaning of the requests under investigation is further explored in subsequent sections.

Frequency and duration of requests and responses

In the literature, "paradoxical" injunctions have been described in temporal isolation. In general, the request is presented as it occurs in a single episode. One descriptive question for this study involved asking how involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests are negotiated through time. Subjects were asked how many times they had made their request, how many responses occurred following their request, and how much time elapsed between

the first request episode and the last request or response episode.

In the involuntary behavior request group, subjects reported making requests between 1 and 1012 times with the median frequency being 4.5 requests. The subject who estimated 1012 instances of making her request was describing a ten year campaign to get her younger brother to be more calm and less explosive. The total number of requests was based on her estimate of the weekly frequency of making the request. Subjects reported between 1 and 1896 responses following the first request with the median frequency being 17. Again, the extreme case of 1896 responses stems from the interactions of the subject mentioned above with her brother and was an estimate based on a weekly frequency of responses. The length of time elapsed between the first request and the last request or response ranged in the involuntary behavior request group from less than a day to approximately ten years, again in the case previously mentioned. The median length of time over which these requests were negotiated was 5.44 months.

In the noncompliant behavior request group, subjects reported making their requests between 1 and 16 times with a median frequency of 4 request episodes. Estimates of the number of responses made following noncompliant behavior requests were not clearly given in three cases; of the remaining 17 subjects, between 1 and 300 responses were

reported with a median frequency of 6. The length of time elapsed between the first request and the last request or response for the noncompliant behavior request group ranged from under a day to nearly 4 years. The median length of time over which the requests were negotiated was 6.9 months.

Discussion. The major interest of the findings reported here on the temporal characteristics of involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests is simply that both request types are commonly negotiated over an extended period of time and typically involve repetitions of both request and response episodes. This finding contrasts with the typical presentation of these requests in the literature in terms of single episodes and supports the need to evaluate such a request in the particular temporal framework within which it occurs.

## Research Questions

### Group comparisons

One goal of the present study was to assess whether formal differences between involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests are associated with differences in how these requests are negotiated in social interaction. One approach to this question involved the comparison of mean ratings between the two request groups of the variables assessed by subjects. These variables

included the episodic characteristics of valence, coherence, and control; life-script and relationship reflexive need strength; and ratings of responses following the request in terms of satisfaction, compliance, and involuntariness/ noncompliance.

'T' tests for independent means were performed comparing the involuntary behavior request group with the noncompliant behavior request group on all the variables described above except for control. For the response episodes, comparisons were based on the 16 subjects in the involuntary behavior request group and the 15 subjects in the noncompliant behavior request group who reported a less and a more satisfying response episode. Comparisons were made within each of these response types. The subjects who reported only one response episode were not included in this analysis. Out of all the variables compared, two showed heterogeneous variance and the 't' was calculated specially to account for this. No significant differences between the groups were found. Because of the categorical nature of the data on control, a chi-square analysis was performed for this variable. No significant group differences were found.

Discussion. The failure to find significant differences between the involuntary behavior request group and the noncompliant behavior request group is not grounds for asserting the lack of such differences. It is possible that the variables assessed are not those which distinguish

between the groups or that error in measurement masked actual differences. However, the negative findings are suggestive of a lack of differences in women's perceptions of interactions surrounding involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests. The theoretical interest of this finding is that the formally paradoxical nature of the noncompliant behavior request does not appear to have a dramatically different impact on interaction compared with the formally problematic nature of the involuntary behavior request. Merely the potential for meaning oscillation inherent in the nature of the noncompliant behavior request does not appear to propel interaction along a distinctive course. This would contradict explanations based on logical paradox of the source of difficulty with "paradoxical" requests.

## Satisfaction with responses

A second research question for the study involved the existential issue, do satisfying responses to involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests occur? This question was addressed through asking subjects to rate the degree of their satisfaction with the responses described following the request. Before presenting the data on subjects' satisfaction with responses following their requests, the types of responses are examined.

According to the interview format, subjects were asked

how many responses occurred following the first time they made their request. When subjects reported more than one such response, they were asked to describe the least satisfying response episode and the most satisfying response episode. In some cases, subjects explained that they could not differentiate multiple episodes on the basis of satisfaction and so described a single episode only. Subjects who recalled only one response episode, of course, reported on that episode alone. The result of this procedure was that for the involuntary behavior request group, three subjects described single response episodes and 16 subjects described two response episodes contrasting in the degree of the subject's satisfaction with the response. One subject described two response episodes, but asserted that these did not differ in terms of her satisfaction with the response and so her ratings were averaged across the episodes to produce a single response episode. In the noncompliant behavior request group, five subjects described single response episodes and 15 subjects described two response episodes contrasting in the degree of the subject's satisfaction with the response.

In order to assess whether satisfying responses occur following the requests under investigation, the number of subjects reporting at least one satisfying episode following their request was determined. A response was considered satisfying based on a rating of 4 or less on a 9 point

satisfaction scale in which 1 was "completely satisfying" and 9 was "completely dissatisfying." According to this definition, 18 subjects (90.0%) in the involuntary behavior request group reported a satisfying response and 17 subjects (85.0%) in the noncompliant behavior request group reported a satisfying response. Also of interest here is the finding that 14 subjects (70.0%) in the involuntary behavior request group and 11 subjects (55.0%) in the noncompliant behavior request group rated a response "completely satisfying" on the satisfaction scale.

Dissatisfaction with response episodes was also reported. In the involuntary behavior request group, nine subjects (45.0%) described a response episode which they rated 6 or more on the satisfaction scale and in the noncompliant behavior request group, six subjects (30.0%) described a response episode which they rated 6 or more on the satisfaction scale. Only three subjects (15.0%) in the involuntary behavior request group rated a response "completely dissatisfying" and only one subject (5.0%) in the noncompliant behavior request group labeled a response "completely dissatisfying." The results on satisfaction with response episodes are summarized in Table 4.

Discussion. The finding of a large majority of subjects reporting satisfaction with a response following an involuntary behavior request or a noncompliant behavior request lends strong support to the position that these

Table 4

Satisfaction with the Response Following an Involuntary Behavior Request or a Noncompliant Behavior Request

| Rating on Satisfaction Scale[a] | Involuntary Behavior Request | Noncompliant Behavior Request |
|---|---|---|
| 4 or less | 18 (90.0%)[b] | 17 (85.0%) |
| 1 | 14 (70.0%) | 11 (55.0%) |
| 6 or more | 9 (45.0%) | 6 (30.0%) |
| 9 | 3 (15.0%) | 1 (5.0%) |

[a]A nine point scale with one being completely satisfying and nine being completely dissatisfying.

[b]Percentages are based on a group size of 20 and total over 100 because many subjects reported on two episodes, one of which was more satisfying and one of which was less satisfying.

request types are not inevitably associated with dissatisfaction in close relationships. This contradicts the assumption commonly expressed in the literature that these requests necessarily inhibit the requester from enjoying the response following the request. The finding of relatively few cases in which the subject felt completely dissatisfied with the response following an involuntary behavior request or a noncompliant behavior request suggests, in contrast, that a complete rejection of such a response may be the exception rather than the rule in interactions involving these requests. This finding has considerable significance for understanding the nature and meaning of these kinds of requests in interaction.

Satisfaction, compliance, and the involuntary or noncompliant nature of the response. In Chapter IV, one research question was proposed in terms of an hypothesis concerning the relationship between satisfaction with the response following an involuntary behavior request or a noncompliant behavior request and the interpretation of that response as involuntary or noncompliant for responses seen as compliant. To recapitulate, it was predicted that when a response following one of these requests is seen as compliant, i.e., the respondent is understood to be making an effort to fulfill the request, then the degree of satisfaction with the response is positively related to the degree to which the response is also interpreted as

involuntary or noncompliant according to the type of behavior requested. For example, given a request for independent behavior, if the respondent produces a response which the requester sees as an effort to fulfill the request, then the requester's satisfaction is related to whether the response is also seen as noncompliant, i.e., independent. This formulation derives from the view that when a response is interpreted as simultaneously compliant and involuntary or noncompliant, then satisfaction occurs. Conversely, if a response is seen as merely compliant and not involuntary or noncompliant, then dissatisfaction occurs.

The determination of a compliant response was made on the basis of a rating of the statement, "The other person acted as s/he did because of my request," 4 or less on a 9 point scale with 1 being "strongly agree" and 9 being "strongly disagree." Fourteen subjects in the involuntary behavior request group and 14 subjects in the noncompliant behavior request group rated at least one response compliant according to this criterion. In some cases, subjects rated both the responses they described as compliant according to this criterion. Because of the correlation method of analysis, it was not possible to use two responses from a single subject. In order to maximize the sample size for the correlation, a random decision process was used to select one of the two responses described as compliant by

the subject. This selection process was designed to include an equal number of less satisfying and more satisfying response episodes.

In neither the involuntary behavior request group nor the noncompliant behavior request group was there a significant correlation (Pearson product moment correlation coefficient) between satisfaction and the interpretation of the response as involuntary or noncompliant for responses seen as compliant. The correlation for the involuntary behavior request group was .27 and the correlation for the noncompliant behavior request group was .26. Thus, there was no support gained for the hypothesis of a positive relationship here. However, it is of interest that a number of cases in both request groups did follow the hypothesized pattern thus supporting the possibility of this meaning pattern in interactions involving these requests. In the involuntary behavior request group, five subjects (25.0%) reported satisfaction at a level of 4 or less on the satisfaction scale and a rating of the involuntary nature of the response at a level of four or less on the corresponding scale for responses deemed compliant. Four subjects (20.0%) reported the converse--for responses deemed compliant, they rated satisfaction 6 or more and the involuntary nature of the response 6 or more. In the noncompliant behavior request group, 9 subjects (45.0%) rated satisfaction 4 or less and the noncompliant nature of the response 4 or less

for responses seen as compliant; in the opposite direction, 2 subjects (10.0%) rated the response 6 or more on the satisfaction scale and the noncompliant nature of the response 6 or more for responses deemed compliant.

Discussion. Interest here in the interpretation of responses following involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests derives from the position presented in the literature that it is the very assessment of a response as compliant which diqualifies it from being considered involuntary or noncompliant and therefore from being a successful response to the request. Compliance is purposeful and therefore cannot also be involuntary and compliance cannot be noncompliant. On theoretical grounds, it has been argued that these apparent contradictions do not necessarily surface in interaction and that it is possible to simultaneously interpret a response to an involuntary behavior request or a noncompliant behavior request as compliant and involuntary or noncompliant. For the study, it was further hypothesized that satisfaction would occur when this apparently contradictory attribution was made and that dissatisfaction would occur when it wasn't, i.e., when the compliant response was not also seen as involuntary or noncompliant. While this predicted relationship did not hold in terms of a significant correlation, a number of cases were found in which the predicted relationship was found among the variables of compliance, satisfaction, and

the involuntary or noncompliant nature of the response. This suggests that while the predicted relationship among these three variables may not be a predominant tendency in these types of interaction, it at least represents a potential meaning pattern in these interactions. However, due to the unknown reliability and validity of the ratings and possible ambiguities of meaning, no firm conclusions can be drawn as to the hypothesized relationship among the variables of compliance, satisfaction, and the involuntary or noncompliant nature of the response.

## The Meaning and Negotiation of Involuntary Behavior Requests and Noncompliant Behavior Requests: A Qualitative Analysis

In Chapter III, the metarules formally defining the nature of involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests are presented according to CMM nomenclature. At that point it was argued that these rules are variably invoked in social interaction depending predominantly on the dynamics of the life-script and relationship levels of meaning. This section departs from the formal analysis offered above and explores the nature of these life-script and relational processes in terms of the relevant content. Data from the study are used to illustrate the proposed analysis.

This section is organized in two parts. First, an overview of the analysis is presented and second, this is explored and discussed with reference to specific cases drawn from the study.

## Overview

The focus on a formal analysis of involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests has kept at bay the question of the meaning of these requests. While it is assumed here that meaning is context-dependent and that, therefore, there can be no inherent meaning to these request types which holds absolutely in all situations, it is suggested that the essence of these requests is an injunction for autonomy. This is most apparent in the case of the noncompliant behavior request. Here the respondent is asked to act purposefully and independently with respect to the requester which is, of course, the definition of autonomous behavior. The most obvious example is the request for independence.

With respect to involuntary behavior requests, the injunction for autonomy is not so clear. The connection depends on the observation that in ordinary interaction, the involuntary behavior request manifests itself in terms of an injunction for feeling or emotion. The respondent is asked "to want" to do something or to feel differently. As Averill (1980a) has pointed out, such affective experiences

reflect highly personal evaluative judgments; they communicate most genuinely "what that person considers important about himself, even those aspects of his personality that he may not recognize or admit" (Averill, 1980a, p. 310). Because feelings and emotions declare the individual's beliefs in this way, they count as autonomous behaviors. One cannot be compelled or forced to have an emotion; a feeling reflects the social actor's individuality.

Granted that involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests represent injunctions for autonomy, what is the inherent significance of such an injunction? The most apparent issue entailed here concerns control. If I ask you to do something independently or "to want" to do something I am asserting my own control over your behavior, while at the same time requesting you to act autonomously, i.e., to behave in a manner which is free of external constraint. This is the contradiction which may define these requests as problematic. However, this contradiction is not so much an occasional problem in close relationships as a central issue which is constantly being negotiated in such relationships--how much control do partners have over their own and over each other's behavior?

Control is the central issue raised by involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests, but the significance of this issue derives most importantly from

its interaction with the issue of closeness. Karpel (1976) provides a discussion of four relationships modes which is helpful in this regard. "Unrelatedness" is the term he uses to describe a psychologically primitive relationship mode in which the partners tolerate only the most minimal involvement. In "pure fusion," a slightly less primitive relationship mode, the boundary between the partners is completely lost and each person experiences the other as the self. The next relationship mode, "ambivalent fusion," represents a more mature interpersonal stance in which partners experience conflict over personal identity and relational attachment. Partners are ambivalently attracted to the relationship--on the one hand they long to give themselves up to the closeness of involvement, but on the other hand, they fear the loss of self they experience in such closeness. In "dialogue," the fourth relationship mode and the most mature, partners have discovered how to negotiate the contradiction of being involved with each other, but at the same time being separate. They are capable of true intimacy and, at the same time, highly independent activities.

The relationship of control to the four relationship modes presented above is as follows. In unrelatedness, neither person feels any control over the other's behavior. In pure fusion, the experience is just the reverse--each partner feels complete control over the other and feels

completely controlled by the other. In ambivalent fusion, control is a large component of the conflict and oscillation of the relationship. As the partners move together, one or both experiences the other person as having too much control, as being constricting. This may be a primary factor in the flight from the relationship or other symptomatic resolutions. Karpel (1976) discusses several of these in more depth. In dialogue, partners experience a balance of being able to influence each other, but they tolerate the lack of complete control.

How, then, do involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests connect with these issues of closeness and control? By expressing an injunction for autonomy, these request types highlight the problem of how much control each partner will have, and this process interacts with how much closeness the partners feel with each other. Partners who function in a relationship mode of unrelatedness would not express involuntary behavior requests or noncompliant behavior requests--they do not feel able to exert control of any kind over each other's behavior. By contrast, the partners bound by pure fusion experience involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests as completely consistent with their relationship. Because the other is experienced as the self, a request for enjoyment or independence does not represent a true push for the other's autonomy, but rather as a message

to another part of the self as to appropriate behavior. The key here is that the respondent experiences the injunction as another invitation to share in the identity of the requester. The capacity to be completely controlled by and able to control the other does not raise anxiety for the partners.

In ambivalent fusion, issues of control and closeness are central and it is within this relationship mode that the traditional understanding of "paradoxical" injunctions is most relevant. Recall that these injunctions have been seen as necessarily frustrating either because the respondent's attempted response is disqualified by virtue of being compliant or because the respondent finds it impossible to even attempt compliance due to the nature of the request. For example, if the respondent is told to be more affectionate, his/her attempts to comply may be rejected by the requester as non-genuine because the behavior has occurred only following the request. Or the respondent may feel stymied by the problem of how to be affectionate on command. The problem here is that control is understood by the partners in the absolute terms characteristic of the ambivalently fused relationship. To respond to a request counts as being completely controlled by the requester. This fantasy of complete control is at the same time a fantasy of complete closeness. However, in the ambivalently fused relationship, this fantasized closeness is equally

desired and feared. This is why the attempted response must be disqualified or not attempted, because of the underlying anxiety over closeness. Thus, the request reflects the assumed possibility of complete merging and the disqualification represents the protection against this fusion.

In the dialogic relationship mode, partners have moved beyond the fantasies and fears surrounding control and closeness in the ambivalently fused relationship. They accept the reality of limits and the essential separateness of the individuals. Within this relationship mode, then, the injunction for autonomy represented by an involuntary behavior request or a noncompliant behavior request is consistent with the sense that influence is possible, but not absolute influence. This allows both for the respondent to attempt a response which is simultaneously compliant and autonomous and for the requester to confirm and appreciate this response. It is this acceptance of limits to control and closeness that makes possible the experience of true mutuality in the dialogic relationship mode.

## Case illustrations

As noted above, in the unrelatedness relationship mode, involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests are not made due to the partners' experience of a lack of reciprocal influence. Naturally, then, no subjects

in the study reported on these requests within a relational context of unrelatedness. Pure fusion is a primitive relationship mode and in a normal study sample, one would expect to find few if any subjects describing requests within such relationships. In the study, one subject described an uncommon relationship, that with her identical twin, which appeared to approach pure fusion. This subject's interactions with her twin around a noncompliant behavior request are discussed first. Following this, an example of a request made within an ambivalently fused relationship is reviewed and the section concludes with an example of a request made within what appeared to a dialogic relationship mode.

The subject who described her request in a relationship context approaching pure fusion was reporting on her interactions with an identical twin. The evidence of a highly fused relationship came from the subject's several remarks on the lack of separation between herself and her twin. For example, the subject said, "I consider us like one person," and at another point she volunteered, "We hardly have to speak, we know what each other are thinking." The request described by the subject was for dominance with regard to studying; she told her sister on several occasions, "Make me study. I have to get this done and I don't feel like it." In the less satisfying situation described by the subject, the sister, who was already

studying, simply responded, "Well, I'm going to be up for a while so just get to it." The subject experienced this response positively, saying, "It was exactly what I was looking for," but indicated a degree of ambivalence by also admitting concern that the response might have encouraged a lack of self-reliance. In addition, the subject denied that her twin actually took control of her behavior: "She was reinforcing it, but she didn't have the last say on whether I was going to do it."

This subject also described a less satisfying response from her twin in response to a similar request. In this situation, the sisters were up late studying for finals and the subject asked her twin to make her stay up. This time, instead of encouraging the subject, her twin accepted her desire to go to sleep by saying, "Don't worry about it, I'll help you out," meaning that she would help the subject during the exam. The subject also thought that her twin might have challenged her by saying, "I can't believe you're going to sleep when we're not through with this. If you don't want a good grade, go ahead, go to sleep." The outcome of this exchange was that the subject stayed up another hour or so to study and her twin studied another half hour after that.

The subject asserted that her twin had most influence over her in this situation when she accepted the subject's desire to go to sleep. The subject said that "would have

got me the most. She would have been confident in the morning and I wouldn't have been. We've always done the same, so I know what she can do, I can do." The subject also expressed some dissatisfaction with her sister's decision to stay up because of the subject's intense desire for sleep. Overall, her satisfaction with her twin's response was mixed, but slightly more positive than negative.

In relationships characterized by pure fusion,it has been suggested that involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests are experienced as messages to another part of the self. In this case of the identical twins, the more satisfying episode described reflects this sense of oneness between the sisters. The request was for encouragement in the effort to study and the response was exactly what was desired. It is important to note, however, that the subject did not experience her sister as taking control of her behavior. This resistance to experiencing the sister's control as well as the subject's concern with self-reliance noted above are signs of ambivalence over possible fusion in this relationship. In a completely fused relationship, one would expect satisfaction with being controlled.

Regarding fusion in the relationship, it is significant that the twin's more influential remark in the less satisfying episode was one which suggested difference

between the sisters--the subject could go to sleep and the twin would help her in the morning. The subject's alarm in response to this comment reflected her concern that the twin would do better than she on her exams. While certainly a sign of competitiveness in the relationship, the subject's anxiety may also be interpreted as resulting from concern over losing identity with her sister. Here the noncompliant behavior request did not lead to confirmation of the sense of closeness between the sisters, but rather triggered a sense of differentness and autonomy that was difficult for the subject to accept.

In this case, then, of a relationship approaching pure fusion, the noncompliant behavior request functioned within limits in one situation to confirm the closeness of the sisters. In the other situation it was associated with the anxiety-provoking possibility of separateness. As an injunction for autonomy, the request was a part of the negotiation of closeness and control in this relationship,

The second case to be discussed is one in which the involuntary behavior request played a central role in an ambivalently fused relationship. The subject described her request in the context of a five year romantic relationship with a man. She had broken off the relationship a year prior to the interview largely because of her dissatisfaction with her boy friend's response to her request. The subject was much involved in helping

activities--for example, she volunteered at a half-way house for alcoholic women and she took in disadvantaged children for summer stays--and the request to her boy friend in the interview was that he should be similarly concerned for others. The subject saw her boy friend as a basically selfish person and understood her request as directed towards changing his personality so as to be more compassionate towards others. It was the subject's eventual conclusion that her boy friend could not make this desired change that led her to discontinue a romantic involvement with him.

During the interview, the subject described two basic responses that her boy friend made following the request. The less satisfying type consisted of occasions when the boy friend reported on actions he had taken which he believed showed that he was compassionate towards others. For example, the subject described a phone call in which the boy friend told her that he had participated in a benefit dinner for a nursing home held at the home. So, in addition to the financial contribution for the dinner, the boy friend had made actual contact with needy individuals. The subject perceived this effort as one directly solely towards pleasing her and gaining her affection. At the time she expressed polite interest, but felt that, if her boy friend thought about her response later, he would have realized that she wasn't impressed. The subject also said that in

other similar situations with her boy friend she would often tell him, "You don't know how bad people have it."

The second type of response that she described was one in which her boy friend listened to her talk about her own work with clients. The subject said that her boy friend was very pleasant during these conversations and that he made useful and perceptive comments. At the time of these episodes, the subject said she believed her boy friend was changing and that he was sincerely concerned about others. However, in retrospect, the subject felt that in these situations, as in the type described above, her boy friend was only making a show of concern for her sake: "He was probably just giving me the right answers and shutting off the issue as fast as he could in the best possible way without me realizing it."

This case illustrates a particular relational negotiation of an involuntary behavior request, one which is in line with how this request type has been traditionally understood in the literature. The subject expressed her request and then disqualified her boy friend's efforts to fulfill her request for being compliant--he only acted in a compassionate and concerned way to please her, he didn't really feel this way. Notably, the subject did not disqualify all of her boy friend's responses when they were made, his expressed concern about her work with people was only disqualified in retrospect.

The significance of the subject's interactions surrounding her involuntary behavior request may be best understood within an appreciation of the dynamics of ambivalent fusion. The most striking aspect of the subject's report was her assertion that her boy friend's responses following her request were nothing more than efforts to please her. This disqualification reveals the fantasy of complete control--the subject saw her boy friend as acting without any degree of autonomy. Within the ambivalently fused relationship, however, complete control threatens complete closeness and it was through the subject's disqualification of her boy friend's responses following her request that she defended against fusion. In fact, it was the subject's dissatisfaction with her boy friend's capacity to fulfill her request that impelled her finally to terminate the relationship. In other words, the subject's disqualification of her boy friend's responses shows her assumption of absolute control over him while at the same time it represents the avoidance of the possibility of pure fusion with him.

The third case to be discussed here is intended to illustrate how a noncompliant behavior request may be associated with a dialogic relationship mode. In this case, the subject also described a romantic relationship which she had broken off. Although in part the break-up was associated with issues involved in her request, these were

quite distinct from the previous example. This subject reported that her request to her boy friend made on approximately seven occasions was for him to bring her a surprise. She specifically described one episode in which her boy friend was borrowing her car to do some errands and she simply said to him, "Bring me a surprise." She explained that she felt she was asking for a "symbol of love" and that she "wanted him to say yes, but not to think of it--'she wants me to do it'--I wanted him to think it was a good idea." The outcome was that upon returning, the boy friend presented the subject with a blouse he had bought for her. The subject reported complete satisfaction with her boy friend's actions and explained: "I think he did what he did because I asked him to, but I think once the request was made, he enjoyed it."

The most satisfying response following the subject's request occurred when her boy friend bought her an art print that he knew was a special favorite of hers. He gave this to her when they were separating for the summer. The subject was completely surprised by this gift and "thrilled." She said, "I thought it was really a thoughtful thing to do and it showed how much he really cared."

The issue which led to the subject's breaking up with her boy friend was that she felt she was too dependent on him. So although she felt very positive about being able to ask for and receive a surprise from him, this responsiveness

on his part also made her wonder if she relied too much on his care and whether she could be independent. This is what she broke off the relationship to discover.

The presence of the subject's ambivalence over being too dependent on her boy friend is a sign that this relationship approached, but probably did not achieve a dialogical relationship mode, since within such a relationship mode, the growth and independence of the partners would be fostered rather than retarded. However, the negotiation of the noncompliant behavior request described by the subject is consistent with a dialogic relationship mode. Note that in the first exchange described, the subject both desired and confirmed the other's response to her request, i.e., she experienced influence over the other's behavior,and at the same time the other's autonomous fulfillment of the request. Having accepted some, but not complete influence of her boy friend, the subject opened herself fully to an experience of closeness with him. This closeness prompted a small, but tolerable degree of anxiety. In the second episode described, the subject saw her boy friend's behavior as completely autonomous and gave herself over again to an experience of intense intimacy. Without the fear of fusion, this subject did not need to disqualify her boy friend's behavior as merely compliant. Her confirmation of his autonomy was simultaneously a confirmation of their closeness.

## Summary

Despite widespread interest in the negotiation of paradoxical injunctions in ordinary relationships, this study is the first to explore empirically the simple question, "What happens when these requests are made?" The descriptive data gathered contradicts the general impression of paradoxical communication gained in the literature. First, involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests do not appear to be rare injunctions in ordinary relationships. The large majority of subjects who attended sessions had little difficulty identifying such a request in their own experience. Although some self-selection undoubtedly occurred, the fact remains that with very little difficulty 40 undergraduate women were located who could describe an example of an involuntary behavior request or a noncompliant behavior request in a close relationship.

A small group of subjects spontaneously responded to the elicitation examples with reservations about the desirability of making such requests. They were tuned into the potential difficulties involved with these injunctions, thus showing that the problems associated with these requests in the literature are salient for a certain small percentage of individuals. But again, the expression of reservations was the exception rather than the rule. This

suggests that doubts about these requests as typically portrayed in the literature occur for relatively small number of individuals; the majority proceed with these injunctions without wondering whether they should make the request or whether they will be able to trust the response they receive.

The elicitation process showed certain noncompliant behavior requests to be relatively more salient in subjects' close relationships. Asking someone to be independent or to do something on his/her own initiative was not uncommon for these subjects. In the study sample, a number of the requests described were familiar from the paradoxical communication literature including, "Be independent," and, "You should enjoy studying." Other requests were more novel--especially involuntary behavior requests for feeling changes. The formal specification of involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests allows for the broadening definition of what requests to include in these categories beyond some vague reference to a "Be spontaneous" injunction as typically given in the literature.

Subjects in this study typically described involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests in romantic relationships, although it was not clear whether this resulted from the elicitation examples given or from a greater frequency and higher salience of these requests in romantic relationships. Clear support in the study was

obtained for the temporal extension of the negotiation of involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests. Subjects typically reported making a particular request on several occasions and receiving several responses following their request. In the literature, the focus has generally been on a particular request episode while this study supports the need to examine the negotiation of the request through time to better understand its meaning.

Turning to the more specific research questions explored in the study, no support was found for the existence of differences between ratings of interactions involving involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests. Although the actual existence of group differences cannot be clearly rejected on the basis of the study, this finding does indicate the lack of dramatic differences in the negotiation of formally paradoxical noncompliant behavior requests and formally impossible involuntary behavior requests. The lack of an obviously greater difficulty dealing with injunctions which are formally paradoxical provides some empirical support for the conceptual argument that paradoxical communication forms do not influence interaction in particular ways.

The study provides strong support for the existence of satisfying outcomes to involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests. In fact, a large majority of subjects reported at least one response with which they

were essentially satisfied and a substantial group reported being completely satisfied with at least one response following their request. This reverses the expectation that such requests necessarily lead to frustrating and unsatisfying outcomes and it suggests that a completely negative outcome to such a request may be the exception rather than the rule in ordinary relationships.

A particular hypothesis was explored in the study, i.e., when a response to an involuntary behavior request or a noncompliant behavior request is seen as compliant, then the degree of satisfaction with the response is related to the degree to which the response is also seen as involuntary or noncompliant according to the terms of the request. The study did not show the hypothesized positive correlations, although a number of cases did fit the predicted pattern. The existence of these cases suggests that the interpretation of compliance in the response following an involuntary behavior request or a noncompliant behavior request does not necessarily preclude satisfaction with the response or the simultaneous interpretation of the response as involuntary or noncompliant. Thus, the effort to fulfill the request is not necessarily a basis for the disqualification of the response, as has been suggested in the literature.

A qualitative analysis of the negotiation of involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests was

presented. It was argued that control interacts with the degree of closeness in the relationship and Karpel's (1976) four relationship modes were used to locate these connections. In less developed relationship styles, control and closeness are understood in absolute terms which are either accepted and relished as in pure fusion or negotiated ambivalently. In the more mature relationship mode of dialogue, control and closeness are negotiated in a nonabsolute fashion allowing each partner to retain autonomy and influence. This enables a true experience of intimacy.

Involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests may be understood in terms of the themes of closeness and control in the relationship modes presented above. In relationships characterized by pure fusion, these requests are consistent with the sense of complete closeness and control. In ambivalently fused relationships, these requests reflect the fantasy of complete closeness and control while the disqualification of the response defends against this eventuality. Within the dialogic relationship mode, these requests are negotiated in such a way that some but not complete control is exerted and the result is an experience of genuine closeness.

# C H A P T E R  V I

## CONCLUSION

This dissertation represents a reconsideration of the paradoxical communication literature through the use of conceptual clarification and empirical exploration. In order to place this work in perspective, a number of issues are discussed in this concluding chapter. First, the significance of the concept of paradox in the development of communications and family systems theories is reviewed and within this context the importance of the conceptual argument proposed in Chapter II is highlighted. Recommendations for the future theoretical use of the concept of paradox are also presented. Second, the major contributions and limitations of the research findings presented in Chapter V are discussed. Clinical applications and directions for future empirical research are also reviewed.

The significance of the literature on paradoxical communication may be best understood within the development of the systemic model of human transaction. Bateson and later family and communications theorists were involved in the effort to conceptualize human behavior at the interactional level. As such, they moved dramatically away from the motivational explanations of the psychoanalytic

school and towards an emphasis on formal patterns in human systems. Instead of looking at the individual for a psychological understanding of behavior, they looked to the repetitive cycle of behavioral transactions to explain human actions. For example, family homeostasis as discussed by Jackson re-conceptualized psychiatric symptoms as a function of the family system's tendency toward formal continuity. Individual behavior might change, but the formal pattern of interaction would remain constant.

The systemic model provided a liberating departure from the focus on content represented by psychodynamic theories. Instead of exploring the schizophrenic's delusions as the symbolic expression of myriad historical events, psychosis could be understood as a homeostatic response to threatened changes in the family system, for example, the identified patient's moves to leave home. By implication, if not always by explicit declaration, the systemic form was understood as the cause of behavior.

It was within the systemic model's emphasis on formal causality that paradox attracted such interest. This is because logical paradox is a form which generates vicious-circle meaning reversals. The application of the formal attributes of logical paradox to interaction was consistent with the emphasis on formal causality in systems thinking. The formal features of the paradox were considered a determining influence in interaction. Time and again in the

literature, the Epimenides paradox was summoned to account for presumably inescapable forces in human transactions: in the no-win situation of the communication of families of schizophrenics, in the power of hypnotic suggestion and symptom prescription, and in the more ordinary apparent frustrations of so-called "Be spontaneous" requests.

As a formal force in communication, logical paradox was used to explain a broad variety of interactional phenomena. In their excitement with this radically new type of explanation, theorists overlooked both the actual form of the communication labeled paradoxical and the readily observable instances of nonproblematic negotiations of these forms. The almost mystical power of paradox was preferred to more complex analysis which would necessitate moving away from formal cause to a consideration of the negotiation of meaning and action by conscious, striving human beings.

In this dissertation, the paradoxical communication literature was critically reviewed with the result that three distinct communication forms described as paradoxical in the literature were identified. Contradictory double-level communication may be defined as the occurrence of contradictory messages delivered at distinct levels of abstraction and should not be considered paradoxical. Further analysis of this form revealed three different types of contradictory double-level communication depending on the hierarchical relationship of the contradictory messages:

the paradoxes of abstraction in which the relationship is stable and the higher level message contextualizes the lower level message; the strange loop in which a balance exists between levels with each being equally likely to be the context for the other; and the double bind in which the enforcement of shifts in the hierarchical relationship of the messages functions to prevent a successful interpretation of the communication.

The second form of communication inappropriately identified as paradoxical in the literature is the request for involuntary behavior. Such requests include hypnotic injunctions, therapeutic symptom prescriptions and requests for emotional responses in ordinary relationships. This form of request was conceptualized as formally impossible since a person cannot voluntarily comply with such a request by producing involuntary behavior on purpose.

The request for noncompliant behavior represents a third form of communication described appropriately as paradoxical in the literature. Injunctions for noncompliance in the form of independence and dominance are formally parallel to the "Disobey me" paradox: if the respondent complies with the request, s/he must be noncompliant and if the person is noncompliant, then s/he has complied with the request. Truly paradoxical meaning reversals obtain in this communication form.

This brief review of the communication forms described

as paradoxical in the literature again demonstrates the rich diversity of phenomena to which the concept has been applied. Given the problems with this application, the question now arises as to how paradox ought to be utilized in theoretical efforts to understand human communication. It is the recommendation of this writer that the term, paradox, be retained for theoretical discussion only in its ordinary definition and not in its philosophical definition as a self-reflexive negative statement. In the cases of contradictory double-level communication and the request for involuntary behavior, the usefulness of removing the logical definition of paradox from the literature is apparent as both these forms have been inappropriately described as paradoxical.

However, even in the case of the request for noncompliant behavior, no useful purpose is served by continuing a reference to logical paradox. This is because despite the formal parallel between logical paradox and the request for noncompliant behavior, the actual relevance of this connection has never been established. First, the vicious-circle meaning reversals which occur in logical paradox cannot occur in the actual world of human interaction. The injunction, "Disobey me," when considered in the abstract poses an impossible request. If it is obeyed, it is disobeyed and if it is disobeyed, it is obeyed. One apparent response implies the reverse and so on

in a never-ending circle. If, however, I said, "Disobey me by crossing this line in the sand," what could happen? If you crossed the line, I could say, "Ah ha! You've obeyed me and I said, 'Disobey me.'" If, on the other hand, you stood your ground, I could say, "Ah ha! You've obeyed me by disobeying me!" But neither response would imply the reverse in the fashion of a vicious-circle.

A second reason for abandoning the use of logical paradox to describe noncompliant behavior requests is that the problematic nature of responding to such requests in reality only occurs in terms of the disqualification of compliant efforts. If a woman tells her husband to be more independent, she may interpret his efforts to comply with her request as more dependent behavior, but it is simply a fantastic imposition of the paradox to suggest that she would interpret his failure to behave more independently as evidence of his being more independent.

Instead of conceptualizing the request for noncompliant behavior as paradoxical in a logical sense--although this formal parallel can be drawn--it makes more sense to describe it in terms of the ordinary sense of paradox, an apparent contradiction. This would tie together involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests with respect to their common feature that a compliant response to such a request may be disqualified. The abandonment of logical paradox as a useful model of communication would

open up the field to the challenge of discovering how involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests are negotiated in ordinary interaction and what is their significance. The qualitative analysis presented in Chapter V represents one approach to this problem.

The empirical study presented in this dissertation makes two major contributions to the field. Heretofore, involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests have been considered rare and necessarily dysfunctional injunctions in the context of ordinary close relationships. The study contradicts both assumptions by showing that examples of such requests are easily identified by subjects and that in most cases, at least one satisfying response occurs following such a request. These findings should reduce the mystification which has attended study of these kinds of requests and open the way to exploration of both their adaptive and maladaptive functions in relationships.

One particular clinical implication of the finding that involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests are not necessarily associated with unsatisfying relational interactions is that a therapist who hears of such a request must not assume that this is pathological. For example, a parent may describe to a therapist an interaction in which the request was made for more independence from the child. In this case, the therapist

must not conclude that a dysfunctional paradoxical request has been made, but should rather explore how this request was negotiated. The possibility exists that a successful effort to comply with the request was made by the child and that the parent was satisfied with this response.

A second clinical implication of the present research involves the question of how the therapeutic technique of symptom prescription works. In Chapter II, the point was made that current writers on therapeutic paradox have turned away from a consideration of logical paradox in their discussions of this technique. At the same time, however, the idea that therapeutic paradox is intrinsically powerful has remained popular in the field. This dissertation supports the move away from a focus on logical paradox in understanding therapeutic paradox, but it also demonstrates the importance of relational negotiation of these requests. With regard to therapeutic paradox, this indicates the need to avoid assuming an intrinsic power in the form of the technique and to instead explore the meaning of this injunction as it is negotiated between the therapist and the client or family.

The major limitation of the present study is the use of individual self-report data. This is because the negotiation of involuntary behavior requests and noncompliant behavior requests is necessarily a two-way interaction. One possibility in interactions surrounding

these requests which received attention in this study is that the person who delivers the injunction may disqualify any attempt at compliance. Another possibility which was not investigated here is that the recipient of the request might feel confused and frustrated by the request itself and by the problem of how to comply successfully with the request. A promising research approach for the future would involve the use of interviews with couples about how involuntary behavior requests are negotiated. The present study establishes the fact that individual subjects can identify and describe these request types so it would be possible to arrange for couples to provide similar kinds of reports.

Perhaps one of the most interesting implications of the present study for future research is that it highlights the social construction of both involuntary and independent behavior. In exploring how requests for these types of behavior are negotiated in close relationships, this dissertation provides a starting point for the study of how these highly significant varieties of human experience are created in social interaction.

## FOOTNOTES

[1]The actual paradox of Epimenides the Cretan takes the form, "All Cretans are liars." As Quine (1962) has noted, this statement raises some nonparadoxical possibilities because liars do not always lie. So Epimenides might have been a liar who was telling the truth when he said, "All Cretans are liars."

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# A P P E N D I X  A

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

I. Demographic Information

A. How old are you?

B. What year are you in school?

C. To whom did you address this request?

D. How old is O?

E. O is: Male Female

F. What is O's year in school or occupation?

II. Relationship History

A. What was the nature of your relationship with O at the time you made or were making the request?

B. When did your relationship with O begin?

C. What changes, if any, have occurred in your relationship with O?

III. Request History

A. How many times did you make the request?

B. (Request number = 1) When did you make the request?

C. (Request number > 1) When did you first make the request?

D. When did you last make the request?

IV. Response History

A. How many times did O (insert nature of requested response in passive form)?

B. (Response number = 1) When did O show this response?

C. (Response number > 1) When did O first show this response?

D. When did O last show this response?

E. Of the responses described above, which do you think occurred because of your request?

F. In addition to the responses described above, did O make any specific efforts to fulfill your request?

G. How many specific efforts to fulfill your request did O make?

H. (Specific efforts = 1) When did O make the specific effort to fulfill your request?

I. (Specific efforts > 1) When did O first make a specific effort to fulfill your request?

J. When did O last make a specific effort to fulfill your request?

V. Request Episode Description

A. Recall the time when you made the request that is most clear for you. If you cannot recall a specific time when you made the request, think about a typical interaction in which you made the request.

B. Where were you when you made the request?

C. What was going on between you and O when you made the request?

D. What exactly happened when you made the request? What led up to the request? What happened after the request? What did each of you say and do?

E. How did you understand what was happening in this episode?

F. How did O understand what was happening in this episode?

G. Now I'd like to go back to the specifics of your interaction with O. I'd like you to give me a

descriptive name for each act in the episode. This label should describe what each person was trying to do. Examples of such labels include: insult, plea for help, information seeking. Let's begin with (first act of episode). What name would you give this act?

VI. Request Episode Ratings

A. How positive or negative was your subjective, emotional experience in this episode up to and including your request?

Very Negative — Very Positive

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

B. Please explain your rating.

C. At the end of this episode, how positive or negative was your subjective, emotional state?

Very Negative — Very Positive

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

D. Please explain your rating.

E. At the end of this episode, how positively or negatively did you feel about the long-term consequences of this episode for your relationship with O?

Very Negative — Very Positive

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

F. Please explain your rating.

G. How clearly did you and O understand each other in this episode?

We understood each other very well — We understood each other very poorly

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

H. Please explain your rating.

I. Who had more control over what happened in this episode?

___ I had more control

___ Neither I nor the other person had more control

___ The other person had more control

J. Please explain your rating.

VII. Reflexive Needs

A. What response to your request did you desire from O?

B. How would the desired response have affected your thoughts and feelings about yourself?

C. How much did you need this desired response to your request in order to achieve these thoughts and feelings about yourself?

I needed it very little — I needed it very much

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

D. Please explain your rating.

E. How would the desired response to your request have affected your relationship with O?

F. How much did you need the desired response to your request in order to achieve this meaning of your relationship with O?

I needed it very little — I needed it very much

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

G. Please explain your rating.

H. At the time of this episode, what changes, if any, did you desire in your relationship with O?

VIII. Response Episode Description

A. Now, think of O's response following your request. (If only one response occurred, go to D.)

B. (If the response following the request occurred more than once.) Recall the response following the request that was most satisfying to you and the response following the request that was least satisfying to you. Think now of the least satisfying response following the request. (Go to D.)

C. (More than one response.) If you cannot recall specific responses following the request, think about a typical interaction involving a response following your request which was most satisfying to you and a typical interaction involving a response following the request which was least satisfying to you. Think now of the least satisfying typical interaction.

D. Where were you when the response following the request occurred?

E. What was going on between you and O when the response following the request occurred?

F. What happened exactly when the response following the request occurred? What led up to the response? What happened after the response occurred? What did each of you say and do?

G. How did you understand what was happening in this episode?

H. How did O understand what was happening in this episode?

I. Now I'd like to go back to the specifics of your interaction with O. I'd like you to give me a descriptive name for each act in the episode. This label should describe what each person was trying to do. Examples of such labels include: insult, plea for help, information seeking. Let's begin with (first act of response episode). What name would you give this act?

IX. Response Episode Ratings

A. How positive or negative was your subjective, emotional experience in this episode?

Very Negative Very Positive

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

B. Please explain your rating.

C. At the end of this episode, how positively or negatively did you feel about the long-term consequences of this episode for your relationship with O?

Very Negative — Very Positive

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

D. Please explain your rating.

E. How clearly did you and O understand each other in this episode?

We understood each other very well — We understood each other very poorly

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

F. Please explain your rating.

G. Who had more control over what happened in this episode?

___ I had more control

___ Neither I nor the other person had more control

___ The other person had more control

H. Please explain your rating.

X. Reflexive Effects

A. How did the response following your request affect your thoughts and feelings about yourself?

B. How did the response following your request affect your relationship with O?

XI. Satisfaction and Compliance Ratings

A. How satisfied did you feel with the other person's response in this episode?

Completely satisfied — Completely dissatisfied

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

B. Please explain your rating.

C. The other person acted as he or she did because I asked him or her to do it. How strongly do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Strongly agree — Strongly disagree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

D. Please explain your rating.

E. The other person acted as he or she did because he or she . . . (insert involuntary or noncompliant aspect of requested response). How strongly do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Strongly agree — Strongly disagree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

F. Please explain your rating.

XII. Second Response Episode

A. Think now of the most satisfying response following the request. If you cannot recall a particular response which was most satisfying, think about a typical interaction involving a response following your request which was most satisfying to you.

B. Repeat administration of items VIII.D. through XI.F.